

AUGUSTA;

OR, THE

FEMALE TRAVELLERS.

A NOVEL.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR WILLIAM LANE,
LEADENHALL-STREET.

MDCCLXXXVII.

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AUGUSTA.

CHAPTER I.

DESCRIPTIVE ACCOUNT OF MR. WOODVILLE—HIS MARRIAGE.

MY father was the youngest of seven children. He had been originally designed for the church. To this purpose his father, who was a country gentleman of a middling estate, gave him an excellent education. He went regularly through the usual branches of

learning taught at the University; and made so uncommon a progress, as to be noticed for a young gentleman of the highest hopes.

But his temper and inclinations led him quite another way than that which his father designed. He was frank and open to a degree that made him a foe to every kind of dissimulation, he detested servility and adulation, and could not bear the least semblance of it either in himself or in others. He spoke his mind freely and boldly upon every occasion, careless whom he displeased, and what the consequences might prove. This of course, while it gained him on the one hand the character of being manly and sincere, exposed him to the dislike

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of those from whom he differed in opinion.

A disposition of this sort did not in the least qualify him for a profession, wherein no small portion of caution and reserve is necessary to prosper. He made an early discovery of this truth, and resolved accordingly never to embrace a course of life which he foresaw, from the constitution bestowed upon him by nature, that he was totally unqualified to venture upon with any tolerable hopes of success.

After some years spent in the University, it becoming necessary that he should make an option of some settled course of life, his father, who was a

man of great sense and humanity, endeavoured through mildness and persuasion to reconcile him to that which he had long had in view for him. Among other motives to engage his compliance, he assured him that the difficulties which usually attended a clergyman's life, were not to be apprehended on his account. The patronage of a living of more than five hundred a year was in his possession, the incumbent of which was in his seventy-fifth year. This he might depend upon as already his own.

These were powerful allurements; but the character of my father was proof against them. Notwithstanding a solid and serious turn of thought in all
essential

essential matters, he possessed a fund of jovialness and gaiety which communicated themselves to all his actions. He was besides of an active and enterprising disposition, fond of novelty, and eager to engage in all scenes that brought something uncommon with them. This of course kindled in him an early desire to see the world upon as wide and extensive a scale as he could possibly accomplish.

As he was an obedient and dutiful son, and had always shewn himself ready to comply with his father's desires, whenever they did not thwart what he esteemed his immediate happiness, his averfeness to chime in with the plan sketched out by paternal care, did not

occasion any difference; much less excite any dispute between the son and father. The latter had too much reason, as well as benevolence, to quarrel with him for not being of his sentiments in a matter of so delicate a nature as that of chusing a state for life. He well knew that, unless prompted by inclination, men seldom make any figure in the vocation they embrace, and that every man of sense is the best judge of his own qualifications.

This refusal of my father to engage in the line that had been marked out for him, occasioned however no small perplexity. The fortune that his father was able to give him, was not sufficient for a life of mere pleasure and indolence.

lence. He was therefore necessitated to turn his thoughts upon such a profession, as might not only suit with his education, but render it more beneficial than it usually proves to such as have nothing else to depend upon.

Various schemes were now proposed: A commission in the army was the first; but the idle and dissipated life led by the generality of young gentlemen in that profession, ill accorded with the activity of my father's mind. Had the kingdom been at war, he would have readily embraced it, in expectation of seeing service abroad. But he had long contracted an aversion to the indolence and inaction of a military life in a season of peace.

He would gladly have entered into the service of the East India Company. The fortunes made in that part of the world were not in those days equal to those that have been amassed of late years. The Company was then merely commercial. Trade, and not fighting, was the business of those who went out in that service. It was not however the thirst of gain that actuated my father, so much as the longing to see those remote and remarkable parts of the world. But the prospect of being so long parted from a son for whom he had a great affection, stood so powerfully in the way of this design, that my father, who was tenderly attached to a parent that had always shewn him peculiar

peculiar marks of predilection, consented to relinquish this idea.

As an active life could not however be dispensed with in the system proposed by my father, it was agreed that he should, as soon as such a place could be procured, go out in the station of secretary to some naval commander. It was not long before such an opportunity offered; and he had the satisfaction of being accepted of in that quality by a nobleman, who was going out commander of a small squadron bound to the Mediterranean.

He rendered himself so useful and agreeable to that officer, that on returning to England, he was recommended to

an admiral who was preparing to sail upon an important expedition. As my father had made himself complete master of the Spanish language, in his late voyage, and was reputed a sensible and intelligent young man, he obtained the post of secretary to this admiral; who was so well satisfied with his behaviour, that he made my father's employment as lucrative as it lay in his power; and soon after his return to England, procured him the place of purser to a ship of the line.

As this ship was afterwards employed in several very successful cruizes and expeditions, my father in the space of a few years accumulated a very considerable fortune; to which he made very large additions by the agencies and
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commissions, which his industry and probity procured him among his numerous acquaintance in the navy, after he had quitted the sea, and had from the persuasions of his father and relations settled on shore.

He had on his first going to sea, become acquainted with a wealthy merchant at Leghorn, in whose family, from its being English, he was intimately acquainted, and received indeed on the footing of a favourite. He was then in his twenty-second year: his person was of the middle size, extremely well proportioned, and of a light and active make: his face was comely, and uncommonly expressive: but his behaviour distinguished him in a peculiar manner:

a nobleness and generosity of disposition was visible in his whole deportment; this, added to his sprightliness, and assisted by an excellent education, which was accompanied with great modesty and unassumingness, rendered him a most acceptable companion, and made his acquaintance courted every where.

That family consisted of the gentleman above mentioned, and two daughters. He was a widower, and the eldest did the honours of his house. She was a very handsome, but a very reserved young lady. This was owing to her education in a convent, and in some measure to the injunctions of her father; who being the younger branch of a very respectable family, had early inculcated
this

this disposition in his daughter, from the conviction of its necessity in the country he dwelt in; where people of an honourable origin look upon it as a duty, to avoid all semblance of levity in their demeanour.

As her father had removed from England to Italy while his daughters were very young, they had received an education conformable to the Italian plan. They were of course skilled in music, of which my father being remarkably fond, he found a perpetual fund of entertainment in their company.

The agreeableness of his person, the gentility of his birth and station, and
the

the engagingness of his manners, soon gained him the affection of that family: the father in particular, who discovered in him a fund of prudence and discretion uncommon at his years, gave him his entire friendship and confidence; and they both contracted a mutual intimacy and regard, that lasted unalterably during their whole lives.

My father was of too susceptible a make, to remain long uninfluenced by the charms of his friend's eldest daughter. She was then just emerging from her teens: she was tall and exquisitely shaped; her features bespoke an elevated mind; her nose was aquiline, her eyes black and brilliant, her hair of the same colour, and of a flowing easy curl,

her

her complexion was fair to a degree, and formed a striking contrast to the rest. Though not tinctured with the least appearance of pride, she had a stateliness in her port that forbade all familiarity; and though her looks were full of sweetness, her mien commanded altogether so much respect, that those who were unacquainted with her, would readily have imagined she was a woman of the first quality.

Such was the person who first made an impression on my father's heart. As women soon discover the feelings of men upon their account, she readily saw that she had made a conquest of him, and mentioned it to her father; ingenuously apprizing him at the same time, that

that unless he meant to encourage the young gentleman's addresses, he would do wisely to frame some pretext to prevent his visits in the family; as she felt a partiality for him, of which she could not answer for the consequences, if she suffered it to encrease; which she could not avoid doing, were his visits to continue.

Her father was far from being displeased at this ingenuous confession. He acknowledged my father's merit was every way worthy of her notice and predilection; and assured her, that if he could make his way to her heart, it would not be with his disapprobation.

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Encouraged by her father's consent, she gave way to her inclination in favour of my own: she accepted of his courtship; and it was determined, that as soon as the service my father was then upon, was expired, he should, with the consent of his own father, return to Italy by the way of France, and receive his mistress's hand.

This took place accordingly, in the interval that elapsed before his second voyage with the admiral before mentioned.

CHAP.

CHAPTER II.

BIRTH OF MISS WOODVILLE—
CIRCUMSTANCES ATTENDING IT.

THE fortune bestowed upon him by his friend the merchant together with his daughter, was far from inconsiderable: it enabled him to settle her in the neighbourhood of Portsmouth, in an elegant house; where she lived in great credit and respect, and was highly beloved and caressed by the best families in that part of the country.

In

In the fifth year of their marriage, I was born at Portsmouth; whither my parents had removed to spend the ensuing winter.

As I was their first daughter, I was welcomed to this world with unspeakable transport by my father, who had, to make use of his own words, long earnestly desired to see a counter part of his beloved partner.

Herein his wishes were completely gratified. At a time of life when vanity must be totally extinguished in a female bosom, I may be allowed to dwell so far on the remembrance of what I once was, as to say that the picture I have drawn

drawn of my mother was in every respect
my own.

The rejoicings that accompanied my
birth, gave occasion for several naval offi-
cers of rank to honour my parents with
their visits, and to make some confi-
derable presents to his little darling.

Among them was one of great opu-
lence, who stood my sponsor in com-
pany with his lady. This latter took
so powerful a fancy to her god-daughter,
that having a son about nine years of
age, she declared that were I to prove
the good and charming creature which
I promised to be, she would insist on
his making me his wife.

To

To be thus provided with a husband possessed of an ample fortune at one's very birth, is a contingency that happens to very few. But my destiny was then in a complaisant mood; and was determined to usher me into life with every appearance of future happiness.

Having determined in this loving manner that I should become her daughter, my affectionate god-mother waited with the utmost impatience for the return of her son from a short cruize he was then making in the channel, under the care of an uncle who was captain of a man of war, by way of trying his disposition for the sea.

As

As soon as he came ashore, he introduced him to his little wife. He received me in his youthful arms with a fondness that astonished every body present; said a thousand endearing things to me, and assured his mother and mine, that with their leaves he accepted me as his wife, and would make me such in due time.

This circumstance, however trifling it may seem, gave a decisive turn to much of what has befallen me during the subsequent course of my life.

Behold me then a bride, if I may so call myself, in my very cradle, carest and fondled by my young husband
when-

whenever it was in his power to visit our family, and never relaxing a moment from the warmth of attachment he had expressed on the first sight of me.

It is doubtless out of my power to remember any of those frequent endearments he bestowed upon me while an infant; but it is equally out of my power to forget, that I became, as soon as I was born the object of the sincerest affection to a brave and gallant youth; that he continued to love me beyond any of my sex. Notwithstanding the most powerful temptations to transfer his affections to others, and that I had the happiness to be instrumental in forming him to honour and every noble accomplishment, or to speak more properly,

perly, in causing him for my sake, as he ever acknowledged, to exert himself to the utmost, in order to attain every qualification that might do him credit, and render him worthy of me.

I may truly say, that as soon as I became able to take notice, he was the first object that attracted it. This indeed was no wonder. He was all that was graceful and enchanting, and was fond of me beyond my power of expressing it. Whenever, in consequence of the duties of his profession, he was obliged to a long absence, I missed him in such a manner, that every one clearly perceived what a strong connexion was already formed between us.

In

In his twenty-second year, and in my thirteenth, he went on a voyage to the East Indies. His parting with me made an impression on my memory, which time has never been able to efface. Notwithstanding that tender period of my life, he had so strong a hold of my affections, that I remained long inconsolable, and retained the idea of his person, and of the affectionate manner he took his leave of me, indelibly fixed upon my mind.

In the mean time the fondness of my parents was taken up with the utmost care and attention in my behalf. Having no other daughter, and I but one brother, no expence was spared to bestow such an education upon me as might

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adorn the greatest fortune. Their endeavours were by no means misapplied: I proved an apt scholar in whatever was taught me. My mother, who possessed the French and Italian languages in the highest perfection, soon made me mistress of both. In music she was also my teacher; and in this delightful art, as well as in dancing, I was allowed to excel.

CHAPTER III.

A MISFORTUNE BEFALS MR.

STANLEY—HIS RETURN TO

ENGLAND AND INTERVIEW

WITH MR. WOODVILLE.

DURING the absence of my young husband, as I will call him, his father and mother died. They left a handsome fortune; but it fell into the management of a relation who shortly after turned insolvent, and proved the ruin of every person who had trusted him.

Such a blow put an end at once to all the hopes that had been conceived in favour of my connexion with young Mr. Stanley, my lover's name. He was now a lieutenant in the navy, and upon his return from the East Indies to England, where he arrived a few months after the event just mentioned.

The first place he repaired to after his landing, was the house of my parents. We had quitted the neighbourhood of Portsmouth, and resided now in a street near Hanover Square. The motive for this removal was, that my father being now possessed of a large capital, was desirous to encrease it by connecting himself with people of business in the city.

One morning, as my mother and I were dressing after breakfast, a post-chaise stopped at our door, and a servant announced the arrival of Mr. Stanley.

The dreadful reverse of fortune that had befallen that gallant youth, had often been a subject of discourse among all his acquaintance. It was then I learned, for the first time, the terrible disparity that good or bad circumstances make in the characters of men. While he was imagined to be possessed of affluence, no words were sufficiently strong to express the esteem and partiality which every one felt for him: all his qualities were enumerated with the utmost warmth and applause. But on the unexpected change, every one at first

was struck with astonishment: some indeed lamented his situation, I doubt not, with much sincerity: but I soon observed that gradually his praises grew faint and died away; and in a short time he was hardly mentioned in any company,

To me, who still too well remembered him, such a neglect, of one who had so long been extolled as a young gentleman of the most uncommon merit, was highly offensive. As I had for years been taught to consider him as one that stood in the most tender relation to me, I could not bear with patience the indifference with which I saw him treated. I ventured several times to recal the mention of him in company: but

but was answered with profound silence. Expressing one day my concern at seeing him so much forgotten, my father, who was present, said in a tone favouring of displeasure, Why should you in particular express so much concern upon Mr Stanley's account?

As my father's partiality for him had always been remarkable, I was equally astonished and grieved to hear such words fall from his mouth. He had always encouraged the ideas I had so long entertained in behalf of that young gentleman. To see him therefore so much altered in his disposition towards one who was still so dear to me, was a stroke wholly unexpected: it immediately de-

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prived me of utterance; my blood was chilled; I fell back upon my chair and fainted. On coming to myself, I found my mother in tears, and my brother sitting by me with the most dejected countenance. They both held me in their arms, and sympathized with me in the sincerest and tenderest manner.

When they thought I had sufficiently recovered my spirits to bear with the afflicting news they had to tell me, I was informed that my father had expressed the utmost uneasiness and displeasure at the proofs I had given of my attachment for Mr. Stanley, and that he was determined to give it no countenance, as a connexion with that gentleman was now become improper
being for

for me to think of, and for him to approve.

I was so shocked at this denunciation of my father's will, that I had no power to make a reply, and sunk into my mother's bosom quite insensible. I was indeed so intirely overwhelmed with sorrow, that I remained speechless; and was so weak and faint, that they found it necessary to convey me to bed, where I lay the remainder of that day, and part of the next.

Apprehensive for my safety, it was thought necessary that my father should mitigate the severity of his expressions. To this purpose he visited me, with an assurance that he was a well-wisher to

Mr. Stanley; but that it did not become so young a creature as me, to interest myself upon his account in so warm a manner as I had done.

As I entertained the highest reverence for my father, and was convinced that he bore me the truest affection, I was much comforted by what he said. I felt myself so much revived, that upon his desiring me to rise, and give him my company, I dressed myself and went down-stairs into the parlour; where I found an aunt, my father's sister, that was come to dine with the family.

She was one of those kind hearted and compassionate women, that rejoice in allowing and procuring to each of
the

the sexes an unrestrained freedom in their reciprocal choice. On being apprised by my mother of what had happened, she had prevailed on her brother to treat me with lenity, representing to him the danger that might result from a different usage.

The sight of that good gentlewoman administered no small comfort to me: she was one of the very few who had not forsaken the cause of Mr. Stanley in the wreck of his fortune, and still continued to speak of him in terms of great regard.

The truth was that she had in her younger days experienced a fate not wholly unfamiliar to mine. She had

married an agreeable man of great merit; but who having long waited at home the fulfilling of promises that were continually making, grew weary of them at last, and embarking the property he had left with some adventurers who were going abroad, returned some years after with a tolerable increase of his fortune, but a broken constitution, of which he never recovered.

For this sister, as she was a woman of excellent understanding as well as the most humane heart, my father entertained much respect. She, together with my mother and brother, warmly entreated him to overcome my partiality for Mr. Stanley by gentle methods;

thods; lest by urging me too precipitately, he might wound my feelings, too deeply.

Nevertheless I was obliged to promise my father, not to indulge my propensity to speak of Mr. Stanley anywhere but at home, and only in our family. This I felt myself the more inclined to comply with, as I had been witness with how much coldness he was now mentioned every where else.

Such was the situation of my mind when I was told, that Mr. Stanley was at the door of our house. My mother, who perceived the agitation I was in, and possessed more presence of mind, left me to compose myself in her dressing-

sing-room, while she went down to receive Mr. Stanley, whom she found waiting for her in the parlour.

After mutual civilities had passed, he kindly inquired after me. To this she replied with some hesitation, that my health had of late been somewhat impaired, and that I was at a relation's in the country, for the benefit of a purer air than that of London; but that she expected me shortly in town, as my health was now much re-established.

While they were in discourse, my father returned from his morning's ride, which he usually did before he went to the city. On entering the parlour, and perceiving Mr. Stanley, his surprise was
great

great indeed. The young gentleman informed him that he had landed the evening before at Portsmouth, and travelled all night, without stopping to take any refreshment, in order to have the satisfaction of seeing those whom he most respected as soon as he could possibly enjoy that happiness.

The mention of his having taken no refreshment obliged my father in common civility to offer him some. After he had partaken of what was set before him, he expressed much concern that my absence in the country on account of bad health, would deprive him of the felicity of seeing me; but added, that he should esteem himself supremely
happy,

happy, as soon as I returned, in being permitted to perform the promise he had made at my birth, by laying himself and his fortune at my feet.

Your fortune, Mr. Stanley, answered my father, with a grave tone of voice, and a serious look, and with a pause and gesture that indicated the highest concern. My fortune, Mr. Woodville, answered Mr. Stanley, with an equal demonstration of surprise—yes, my fortune, which, though for the sake of Miss Woodville I could wish ten times greater, is far from contemptible; unless you should deem fifteen hundred a year beneath your notice, and her acceptance.

My

My father seeing him somewhat nettled at the manner he had spoken of his fortune, assured him that he intended by no means to glance at his situation; but my dear Mr. Stanley, added he, I perceive you are ignorant of your misfortune. Have you seen or heard of Mr. Grey, your father's executor?

No, Sir, answered Mr. Stanley, turning pale at the word misfortune, and at the tears which he saw copiously streaming from my mother's eyes. Then, Sir, continued my father, it is not my inclination to be the messenger of woe. It grieves me to the heart, that so deserving a young gentleman should meet with so severe a fate.

A long

A long silence now ensued; during which Mr. Stanley having recollected his spirits, damped and scattered at first by the weight and suddenness of so unexpected a blow, addressed himself in this manner to my father: Sir, I beg that you will be firmly convinced, that it is not the loss of my fortune which affects me in any degree, so much as that loss which must be the consequence of it. Were you ever so much disposed to give me your daughter, I have too much pride to accept of her, unless upon such terms as fortune has now deprived me of the power of offering to her. Until I become possessed of the means of doing that, honour forbids that I should harbour any

any thoughts of a connexion with Miss Woodville.

He rose as he spoke these last words, and taking my father by the hand, Sir, said he, this is the last time you shall see me in your house: I go from hence with a heavy heart; but am firmly determined to deny myself the greatest pleasure I once had, that of paying my respects to your family, till I can do it without the imputation of being led hither by motives of interest.

My father was going to reply; but Mr. Stanley stopped him short with an earnest wish for his happiness, and that of his family; and without waiting for

for an answer, hurried out of the parlour with a dejected countenance, and the tears standing in his eyes; and making a low bow to my parents, stepped hastily into the chaise, and drove off.

Such was the interview between them and Mr. Stanley, after four years absence.

My father was going to reply, but Mr. Stanley stopped him short with an earnest wish for his happiness, and then, gaining, without waiting

CHAP.

CHAPTER IV.

MISS WOODVILLE AND MR. STANLEY MEET AFTER A LONG SEPARATION — HIS DEPARTURE FOR THE WEST INDIES.

IT was very prudently done, on the part of my mother, to tell him that I was absent in the country; for had I been present on this melancholy occasion, I could not have gone through such a trial with any degree of fortitude; and must by my sufferings have added greatly to his own.

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I sat all the while motionless, and almost void of sentiment. When my mother came up, she found me so pale and faint, that she doubted some time whether I should ever recover myself.

My father was so much moved by what had happened, that he was unable to attend his business in the city, and remained all that day at home. When the hour of dinner came, none of us could be prevailed upon to touch any food. It was tea-time before we were able to take any refreshment; when happily we received some relief from the presence of my aunt before mentioned, who paid us a most seasonable visit.

When

When she had been informed of Mr. Stanley's arrival, and the manner of his departure,—Do you really mean, my dear brother, said she to my father, to lose for ever so excellent a youth? Has he, with his fortune, lost all your regard? Do you imagine, that were even your sole pecuniary motives consulted, your daughter would be thrown away upon a man who is an honour to his profession, and whose merit and abilities will, with very little assistance of interest or favour, raise him in all probability, to the highest honours in the naval line?

She spoke these words with great vehemence, and they made a strong impression upon my father, who assured her

her in his turn, that Mr. Stanley had left him so abruptly, that he had not had time to make him the reply which he intended. Had he not, said my father, departed with so much precipitation, I should have asked him to dine with us; and, unless I am totally unacquainted with myself, the affection I bore his parents, and the sense I had of the nobleness of his character, would quickly have overcome any averfeness I may have lately entertained to the connexion so long proposed between him and my daughter.

This speech was such a cordial to me, that I instantly revived, and in the warmth of my satisfaction could not forbear falling upon my knees, and bedewing

dewing my father's hands with my tears. He gently raised me, with the kindest assurances that my happiness was all that he sought, and that upon cool and dispassionate reflexion, he could not blame me for an attachment, in which I had been brought up from my infancy, and which, in truth, it was a subject of equal admiration and praise, I should have persevered in with so much constancy.

My aunt was overjoyed at this declaration ; and added that nothing could be a stronger proof that Mr. Stanley and I were born for each other, than the singularity of our mutual passion. It began with our infancy, and had stood the test of years and long absence unimpaired : it would therefore be the

height of injustice and cruelty, to permit the separation of two persons who were so evidently formed for, and so truly deserving of each other.

Good humour being thus restored, the next question was in what manner to proceed with respect to Mr. Stanley, the greatness of whose spirit was well known, and who was not of a temper to retract his words, when once he had come to any serious determination.

This however did not appear a matter of insurmountable difficulty. The sudden resolves of lovers were on this occasion represented as of small weight, when laid in the scale against the influence of the object beloved. It was
alleged

alleged that the sight of me would quickly dispel the resolutions which Mr. Stanley had formed in the pride of his heart, and in the resentment of the injustice which fortune had done to him.

Several days however elapsed before any tidings could be obtained of Mr. Stanley. The servant who attended at the street door when he took his leave, could give no other information, than that he had heard Mr. Stanley direct the post-boy to drive to his inn; and no body knew where it was.

In the mean time I was not so easy about the affair as the rest of the family

appeared. Notwithstanding my youth and personal inexperience, I had paid so much attention to what I had read and heard, that I became very apprehensive Mr. Stanley would persist in the determination he had signified to my father, and that the pride of his soul would in this instance subdue the feelings of his heart.

In this apprehension I strongly continued, though much pains were taken to remove it, especially by my aunt, who saw the necessity of preventing me from indulging so grievous an idea; but their endeavours were unsuccessful; I remained immoveable in my persuasion.

About

About a fortnight after Mr. Stanley's being at our house, my father, conversing with a merchant upon 'Change, overheard too young gentlemen discoursing of the preparations they were making to set out for the West Indies, and saying that Mr. Stanley would shortly be ready to accompany them. Upon mention of that name, my father accosted them, and took the liberty of asking whether the gentleman of whom they were speaking, was not the son of Captain Stanley of the navy. On being answered in the affirmative, and finding him to be on the point of sailing, he requested the gentlemen to inform Mr. Stanley, that the family at whose house he alighted on his arrival at

London, was extremely anxious to see him.

The two young gentlemen having promised to comply with his request, my father brought us information of what had past, and expressed his expectation of shortly seeing Mr. Stanley; who would not, he believed, leave England without taking leave of persons, of whose good wishes he had no just cause to entertain a doubt. I was indeed the only one who dispaired of seeing him.

The very next day in the afternoon, a coach stopped at the door. All but myself were convinced that Mr. Stanley

Stanley was come—when out of it alighted, not Mr. Stanley, but one of the young gentlemen to whom my father had spoken upon 'Change.

He was a tall comely youth, of a military and resolute mien, but of a most engaging and polite address. He delivered his message in very few words, the import of which was, that no man living could feel higher sentiments of respect for Mr. Woodville's family than Mr. Stanley; but that he also respected his own character too much to recede from the promise he had made to Mr. Woodville; who might however depend on seeing him again, as soon as Fortune had enabled him to act the part of a man of honour

towards his daughter; his fidelity to whom should never expire but with his life.

He added that in less than a week they were to set out for Gravesend, where the ship lay; all their baggage was on board, and they should then sail with the first fair wind.

I was so thoroughly prepared for this news, that though it affected me deeply, yet being no more than I expected, I bore it with more patience than any body could have conceived. What doubtless contributed to this, was a letter which the young gentleman delivered to me, after having obtained my father's permission. The contents of it were

were much the same as the message above specified; to which he added, that as I might rely upon the inviolableness of his attachment, he hoped that he might depend on the continuance of my own fidelity.

My father, into whose hands I put the letter on receiving it from the young gentleman, broke open and read it with great seeming satisfaction. He told him that he would gladly dispense with that rigid observance of his word, which Mr. Stanley thought so incumbent upon him, though he could not help admiring his spirit; entreating the gentleman at the same time to assure Mr. Stanley, that he should be extremely happy to see him; it was the

most earnest request of his family, that he would not leave England without doing them that favour. Were he to deny it, such a refusal would manifest a fullness of disposition much more than that propriety of spirit on which he prided himself. He insisted, in short, that Mr. Stanley should comply with an invitation which was given him in so friendly and cordial a manner, on pain of forfeiting the regard and notice of a family, of which he had no reason to doubt the good wishes.

My father spoke with so decisive an air, and convinced Mr. Stanley's friend so thoroughly of his determination to resent a refusal in the most serious manner, that Mr. Stanley was at last prevailed upon

upon, by the remonstrances of his friend, to alter the resolution he had taken.

He waited upon us the next day at dinner, in company with this young gentleman, who was also invited. His dress was extremely neat, and I saw that he had taken peculiar care of his person upon this occasion; all which I very naturally placed to my account. Nor was I deficient in the like solicitude. My mother, of whom he was a great favourite, assisted with her own hands to decorate me in the most splendid manner.

I was now in my seventeenth year, and the partiality of my friends allowed

me to be at that time an elegant and striking figure. I will venture however to say that I was not in the least tinctured with any coquetry, a vice of which, through the whole course of my life, I was never guilty. If I was desirous to appear agreeable on this occasion, it was purely for the sake of Mr. Stanley,

As it was near four years since we had seen each other, our meeting was attended with the sincerest joy on both sides. The moment he was announced, I ran down-stairs, and flew into his arms. We embraced, and wept over each other, with a tenderness which drew tears from my parents, who were both present, and manifested intire satisfaction

tion at these proofs of our mutual attachment.

The day was spent with the gayest conviviality. The approbation which was given to my love for Mr. Stanley, had rendered me quite another person to what I had been while I thought it in suspense. I felt a serenity that revived all my spirits. Mr. Stanley was in the same agreeable situation; and I do not recollect to have ever tasted more happiness than upon this first interview with my lover after so long absence.

In addition to the pleasure I now experienced, Mr. Stanley informed me, that in consequence of an arrangement relating to the settlement of his affairs,
he

he would be under the necessity of postponing his voyage; which, though it would retard the plan he had formed to re-place himself in a situation worthy of me, still would procure him the inexpressible felicity of enjoying my company some months longer.

This intelligence, and his manner of conveying it, were, one may well think, highly pleasing to me. But what completed my happiness, was the very kind offer from my father, of an apartment in his house to Mr. Stanley during his stay.

It was impossible however to persuade him to accept of it. He alledged, among a variety of other reasons, that
were

were he to avail himself of it, the pain he must endure at his separation from me, after enjoying my presence continually, would become intolerable, when he reflected on the long absence that was to ensue.

My father generously gave him to understand that this separation was his own choice; and that he entertained such a respect for the memory of Captain Stanley, that he should esteem it an honour to match his daughter with the son of so brave and so worthy a man.

But Mr. Stanley, though warmly thankful for my father's benevolent inter-

intentions, persisted inflexibly in the resolution he had formed.

During the stay he made in England, I found ample reasons to justify my partiality in his favour. I discovered every day something amiable and praiseworthy in his character. The noble qualities of his heart and mind successively unfolded themselves as occasions offered, and endeared him so powerfully to me, that I began to look with heart-felt sorrow to the approaching period of his parting from me for so long a time, and his going to encounter such a multiplicity of dangers.

When that dreaded period came, it was with unfeigned grief that my
parents

parents consented to his departure. He had won their affections by a behaviour equally respectful and engaging, and by an assiduity in his attentions to me, that convinced them of the sincerity of his love, while the voluntary banishment to which he condemned himself, proved at the same time with what noble sentiments it was accompanied.

When he came to take his last leave of me, my father entreated him to consider how much he was master of my affections, and how hard a task he imposed upon me by quitting me in this manner; beseeching him to suffer no false delicacy to prevent his return to England in a reasonable time, and at all events.

My

My father was so positive in requiring him to fix a limited term, and I strengthened this requisition with so many tears, that he consented at last to absent himself no longer than four years at the furthest.

CHAP.

CHAPTER V.

INTRODUCTION OF THE TWO
AUNTS OF MISS WOODVILLE.

MATTERS being thus terminated more to my satisfaction than I had at first apprehended, as the hope, however distant, of seeing the object of my wishes still subsisted, I armed myself with resignation, and resolved to wait patiently till Fortune should put a period to the long trial for which I was now to prepare.

I had

I had three aunts. One has already been mentioned. The two others were of a very different character. One of them was the lady of a rich baronet, whom she had married on the score of his money. He had nothing else indeed to recommend him. His father was a man of mean birth, but immense industry, to which public fame added no small portion of roguery. He had toiled during a long life so successfully, that at his death, which happened suddenly, his son found himself in possession of a fortune which, had the old gentleman lived long enough to make his will, would have been greatly curtailed.

The

The fact was, that his son was by no means a favourite of the father. His inclinations lay in quite a different track. Instead of pursuing the business which had enriched his father, he gave himself up totally to the most frivolous of what are called fashionable occupations and pastimes. He frequented the operas and playhouses, not for the pleasures he received either from poetry or music; but merely to display his taste in dress, and the beauty of his person; Nature having made him ample amends in his outside, for the neglect of which she had been guilty in framing his better part.

His father, who saw with regret the disposition of his son to expence and gaiety,

gaiety, had in vain laboured to cure him of such a propensity ; and had therefore determined, after leaving to his son a sufficiency to live comfortably, to divide the remainder between two nephews, whose character much more resembled his own. But Death upon this occasion stepped in so opportunely in favour of his son, that without intending it, he left him complete master of all his possessions.

The first use he made of his opulence, was to marry a girl of infamous character, with whom he had long been privately connected. She had obtained so decisive an ascendancy over him, that she controuled him in his most indifferent actions. Her beauty indeed was exquisite,

exquisite, and she had wit at will; but her passions were unbounded, and she gave such a loose to them, that notwithstanding his subserviency to her temper, and the weakness with which he suffered himself to be governed by her, he could not fail perceiving how ill she treated him. But he would long have dragged the chain of his servitude, had not a female servant who had designs upon him, convinced him of his wife's infidelity: sufficient proofs of this being produced in Court, he obtained a sentence of divorce.

Disembarrassed from this troublesome partner, he took a trip to Paris, by way of relaxing his mind from the fatigue
he

he had undergone in the course of the trial. Here he had the first view of my aunt, who possessing but a slender fortune, was what is by way of courtesy stiled the companion of a young lady of quality newly married, and who was in company with her lord, partaking of the amusements of that capital seat of frivolousness and dissipation.

As the newly-made widower's inclinations corresponded in many respects with those of this nobleman, they had been acquainted in London, through that medium which brings people of all degrees to a level, wealth and expensiveness. They now renewed their acquaintance, and enjoyed together those pleasures,

pleasures, if they may be called such, which result chiefly from a plentiful purse.

Though neither of them were absolutely fools, yet their conduct had nothing of the dignity of man above the vulgar. Education had not been able to wear off the native coarseness of their minds, and they were both a perfect proof, that Fortune takes a peculiar delight in placing men and things topsy-turvy as it were, giving wealth to those who know not how to use it, and investing with titles such as are only calculated to disgrace them.

The lady of this nobleman had given him her hand merely for the sake of

sharing his honours and fortune. Her heart was entirely out of the question: She was gifted with an indifference towards the other sex, that made her seek gratifications of quite another kind, than those which Love prepares for those who unite from motives of mutual esteem and affection.

She had not however brought any blemish on her taste in the opinion of the world. Her husband was young and handsome; but, like his newly-divorced acquaintance, had little else to boast.

As my aunt had long been her favourite, she conceived immediately the design of procuring her a husband in this gentleman. Fully convinced from the

the similitude of my aunt's disposition to her own, that she would have no repugnance in accepting a man of so large a fortune as her matrimonial partner.

In this she succeeded to the utmost of her wish. An acquaintance was soon formed between my aunt and the young gentleman; who, struck with her beauty, and those engaging ways which most of our sex can so well practice when they have an essential point in view, was soon irrecoverably entangled in her nets; and obtained, through the intercession of his noble friend's lady, the permission to pay his honourable addresses to her fair companion.

In this manner the second of my aunts was provided for. Not long after the return of her husband to England, he was, in consequence of acting a useful part to Ministry in the business of an election, where his estate procured him great influence, dignified with the appellation of a baronet, and my aunt of course became a lady.

The third aunt was the wife of one of the most boisterous seamen that ever sailed on that tempestuous element. He was, at the time of life I first knew him, the picture of that deity who presided in ancient days over the winds. His body thick and stout; his face round and red; his eyes hid in his brows, and
of

of a fierce cast. In his younger days I was told that he had been an agreeable man; but nothing remained of that, saving that he was active and well put together. He did not however want some very good qualities. He was generous and friendly, and of the most intrepid and daring spirit. He had commanded a privateer, and had taken many prizes. By these means he was become opulent; and being now retired from a sea life, had commenced merchant, and was deeply connected with my father in commercial schemes.

The manner of his obtaining the predilection of my aunt was curious. She was at a merry-making in the country, where both he and she happened

peried to be the only persons unmarried. This circumstance happening to occasion a great deal of mirth, he offered immediately to become a bridegroom, if the young gentlewoman would honour him with her acceptance, and to settle a good income upon her before he went to sea; that if he were slain in fight, as he was then captain of a privateer, she might live genteelly ever after. As he was known to be in prosperous circumstances, my aunt, whose fortune was very moderate, felt no reluctance to yield to his wishes. He sent directly for a lawyer, and having settled upon her all he was worth, they went to church, and tied the indissoluble band to their equal satisfaction.

When

When I called my uncle-in-law boisterous, I did not mean to insinuate that he was either ill-natured or ill-tempered. He was neither; but having long been accustomed to rule without controul on board a ship, he had contracted an imperiousness that broke out whenever he met with any contradiction. His temper upon such occasions would rise to a degree of turbulence that was offensive in the extreme, and often rendered his company and conversation intolerable.

Such were the two men who had married the two aunts of whom I am about to speak. The baronet's lady, who was dexterous and artful, governed him as she pleased; but the seaman's wife,

E 4

though

though he was by no means a tyrant in his family, did not care to encounter the violence of his temper, and contented herself with the management of her domestic concerns.

Both of these ladies had a son, an only child, of whom they were, as it was natural, excessively fond. The young gentlemen were both turned of twenty, and though neither deficient in external advantages, nor mental accomplishments, were no favourites of mine.

The reason was, perhaps, that as both these ladies had several times given broad hints, that Mr. Woodville might find a husband for his daughter without

out going out of the family, I could not bear an insinuation that thwarted so directly my partiality for Mr. Stanley.

Having but one brother, and my father's circumstances enabling him to provide for us both in a most ample manner, I was of consequence reputed a large fortune; and as such the eyes of all the young gentlemen of our family's acquaintance began to be fixed upon me.

Had my father been of a positive and peremptory character, I should have suffered much anxiety from the frequent proposals that were made relative to me, through such of his friends as were thought to have an influence over him;

but as he loved me tenderly, and had already experienced the dangerous consequence of endeavouring to oppose my inclinations, he resolved to desist from such an attempt, and to leave me to chuse for myself.

The consciousness of this, together with the secret hope of seeing my dear Stanley, as I must call him, in that situation I wished him, enabled me to lead, if not a pleasurable, at least a placid and peaceful life.

The principal obstruction to my tranquillity, arose from the continual endeavours of both my aunts to obtrude their sons into my company, with the view I have already hinted at.

One

One circumstance however militated in my favour against the intrusion of both these young gentlemen. This was the competition between their mothers, who strove in the absence of each other to prepossess me in the behalf of their respective sons as much as lay in their power; not forgetting, by the same rule, to prejudice me against them as much as decency would permit.

By these means I became thoroughly acquainted with the character of both my young cousins, and could I have depended upon the picture drawn of each of them by his aunt, must in prudence have determined to have neither, even though my heart had not been previously engaged.

CHAPTER VI.

PRIMARY ACQUAINTANCE OF
MISS WOODVILLE WITH MR.
VILLARS.

IN the mean time they were not the only pretenders to my smiles. Wherever I visited I found fresh admirers; some of them such as I could not have refused, had not the strength and rootedness of my attachment for my beloved Stanley been irradicable.

The

The most conspicuous of my admirers was one whose behaviour to me was so meritorious, that though it was not in my power to return him the affection he bore me, I could not refuse him my utmost esteem. He was heir to an earldom and a noble fortune. His person was fully correspondent to his rank, and his understanding was adorned with every native and acquired qualification that could reflect lustre upon it.

I happened to be seated near him at an oratorio. He was in company with his sister, a most amiable young lady, in every sense worthy of such a brother. His conversation, though not addressed to me, was plainly meant for me. From the moment I entered the house,
his

his eyes were rivetted on me; but his looks were so respectful, and his deportment so becoming, that my vanity was not a little elated, at commanding the notice of a person of his apparent consequence.

The remarks he made on a variety of subjects were so just, and his conversation altogether was so uncommonly elegant and pleasing, that for some moments I almost forgot my Stanley: he soon however returned to my mind, and I could not forbear upbraiding myself for having suffered a stranger to vie with him in any shape.

My mother and brother were with me. On our leaving the house, he made

made me I think the most graceful bow I ever received in my life. It was accompanied with an expressiveness in his manner and countenance, above all the description that I could attempt.

As soon as we were seated in our coach—Well, Augusta, cried my mother, you have made a conquest indeed, and if I am not quite mistaken, you have not escaped without an impression.

My answer was, that her fondness and partiality led her to view every thing to my advantage; but that I believed it was not unc customary for young gentlemen of wit and gaiety, to testify particular
civility

civility to the ladies in whose company they happened to find themselves, and to exert their talents to the utmost for their entertainment. This, I added, was certainly very commendable, as it contributed to the innocent pleasure of all present.

On our sitting down to supper, she could not refrain from acquainting my father with what had happened. He heard her with evident marks of satisfaction; but said nothing; only looking full at me—with a sigh—which I perfectly understood.

There was no occasion for explaining it; which my mother did, however immediately, by exclaiming in a most affection-

affectionate accent—Oh! my Augusta, that you were disengaged.

I answered her only by casting down my eyes, and letting her see by my silence, that I was most deeply engaged, and in no temper to recede from my engagement.

I was at this time in my eighteenth year. Mr. Stanley had been gone nearly a twelvemonth. We frequently heard from him; and it was with the more satisfaction, as his letters informed us of the increasing prosperity of his affairs; and that he doubted not of being able to return to England much sooner than he had at first dared to promise himself.

Tidings

Tidings of such a nature were a triumph to me, and filled my soul with a joy that I find impossible to express. They were not however equally acceptable to all my acquaintance; to my aunts especially, who began to despair of compassing what they had proposed for their respective sons.

I must do my parents the justice to say, that notwithstanding the solicitations they often were constrained to hear upon my account, they honourably kept their word with Mr. Stanley, and never offered to lay the least injunction upon me contrary to what was evidently my desire. The utmost they ever ventured to express, even upon those occasions when every kind of splendor was held
out

but to allure me, was merely a wish that I were at liberty. Such a treatment endeared them the more to me, as I was convinced that their anxiety for my happiness was at the bottom of all their wishes.

Thus I lived in a continual course of trials; every day seemed to bring forward its temptation; but I stood immoveable; and from their successive continuance gathered at last an habitual strength and ability to resist them.

It was when I had attained to this state of firmness, that I was assailed by the most dangerous attempt upon my inclinations that I had ever yet experienced,

The

The young lord who had appeared so lovely in my eyes at the oratorio, soon discovered, by conversing with some company that knew us, who we were. As his rank was so exalted, and his motives quite unexceptionable, he found no difficulty in procuring himself an acquaintance with our family. A card party was formed at the house of a widow lady of great quality, whom we often visited while in the country, and who had always professed a peculiar predilection in my favour.

To this party our family were invited. While we were at tea, his name was mentioned as one of the company expected to spend the evening. I instantly conjectured myself to be the prin-

principal object interested on this occasion, and that the party had been wholly concerted on my account.

I entirely absolve both my parents of the least collusion upon this occasion. Neither do I believe the lady who invited us, had any precise notion of the engagement subsisting between Mr. Stanley and me; otherwise her sentiments were too noble to have connived at any attempt to dissolve it.

A carriage stopped at the door, and his arrival was announced to the company, who all stood up to receive him with the most unaffected tokens of esteem and respect.

At

At this I was not in the least surprised, after hearing the encomiums passed upon him previous to his coming. Every person present, the ladies especially, represented him in such colours, that I could not help feeling the strongest surprise that so amiable a young gentleman should at the age of five and twenty still be without a partner.

He entered the room with an air of unfeigned modesty, and yet with a dignity that visibly struck every beholder.

After paying the usual civilities to the company, he made me a profound bow,

bow; and seating himself by me, expressed, in most elegant language, the pleasure he felt in seeing me again. The conversation becoming general, he acquitted himself in a manner that fully confirmed the high opinion I had conceived of him.

As this gentleman will take up a considerable share in these memoirs, I think that a more particular description of him may not be amiss. He was in his twenty-sixth year; somewhat above the middle size, and of most perfect symmetry. His gait was easy, and bespoke the man of quality. In his deportment there was an air of importance which, while it was wholly void of superciliousness or affectation, impressed

impressed one with a deep sense of his superiority. His face was oval; his eyes large and blue, full of discernment and fire, and yet tempered with great benignity. His voice was melodious, strong, and manly, and carried a sound of authority which influenced all who heard him.

While Nature had done so much for his outward person, she had not been less lavish within. His understanding was of the first rate: his imagination had a liveliness that rendered him the life of all company. Whenever he spoke, silence and attention awaited upon all he said: not a word was lost; and had not his good breeding prevented him from engrossing more of the

the conversation than what he thought his due, it might have been his own without the least desire of interruption on the part of his auditors, from the pleasure and entertainment that never failed to result from his manner of treating whatever was the subject of discourse.

His knowledge and intellectual acquisitions were astonishing for his age. To the classical learning taught at the University, he had added that no less, if not more necessary stock of modern literature which qualifies a man for the active scenes of life. In French and Italian, of which I was a competent judge, his skill was eminent: he spoke them with the correctness and fluency

of a native: and I was told by able judges, that he excelled equally in various other attainments on which I cannot pretend to decide.

But what rendered him a much more valuable character than all these endowments could have made him, he had a soul replete with sentiments of the most exalted honour. This was peculiarly manifested by the topics to which he gave the preference in conversation: they were such as tended to instruct and edify; and though he possessed an uncommon fund of cheerfulness, he never made it subservient to trifles, and always contrived to exert it to useful, or at least to innocent or agreeable purposes.

The

The circumstance that laid the chief foundation of his many accomplishments, was that his father being the younger brother of a noble family, found it necessary, from the scantiness of his income, to watch with great strictness over the education of a son who appeared then to have little else to depend on for his future advancement in life. Happily, the soil he had to cultivate was so fertile, that his pains and attention were amply repaid; and he lived to see every hope realized that his paternal fondness had foreboded from the promises this darling son had put forth in his earliest years.

This worthy father was lately dead, and his brother who had lately succeeded

ceeded to an earldom by the death of an uncle, was old and infirm. Having remained a bachelor till this event, he had married a lady with whom he had lived many years in a tender connexion; but being both in an advanced age, the only object in his view was to secure her an honourable rank and maintenance after his decease.

With these flattering expectations the young gentleman had set out on what is called the grand tour, which he had performed with a lustre and eclat that seldom accompany young travellers.

I do not mean that he travelled in a shewy and expensive manner, which is almost the only method by which the plurality of our English gentlemen distinguish

tinguish themselves; but that by the dignity of his conduct, and the display of his great accomplishments, he acquired every where the esteem and respect of persons of the first abilities, and the highest distinction.

His uncle, the earl, who loved him as his child, had put him into the possession of one half of his estate, convinced that the use he would make of it would redound to the honour of both. Herein he was not deceived. Mr. Villars, my admirer's name, was so excellent a manager, that notwithstanding he lived in a most brilliant stile, and exercised great hospitality at his country seat, yet he was well known to be in no person's debt, and to per-

form at the same time numberless acts of generosity.

Such was the object with which Fortune thought proper to try my constancy to a man who was then in another quarter of the globe, whose life, affairs, and return were from his situation peculiarly precarious; and whom, were I to wait for till his circumstances were entirely restored to their former prosperity, I might hazard the duration of half, if not my whole life,

But exclusive of my inclination for Mr. Stanley, which was unabated, a strong sense of pride operated within my bosom, and kept it, though not unsusceptible of esteem, and I will even venture

venture to say, affection, yet steadily faithful to its first favourite.

To resume the narrative of the visit from which this digression has necessarily led me. It soon became visible to the rest of the company that the attention of Mr. Villars was chiefly directed to me. When cards were proposed, he politely declined them; and telling me, with an irresistible grace, that the judiciousness of the remarks he had heard me make at the oratorio, having convinced him that I must be a complete mistress of music, he intreated that I would favour him with a performance on the harpsichord.

It was out of my power to deny a request that he urged with equal pressingness and civility. Thanks to the instructions of my mother, I performed so much to his satisfaction, that he expressed it in terms, which, though guarded in the highest degree, yet conveyed in a meaning which it was impossible for me to mistake.

The evening was spent with the utmost festivity. The good old lady, who was a distant relation of Mr. Villars, was unspeakably pleased with his behaviour to me, and took care, before the company broke up, to fix a party for Ranelagh, of which both I and my admirer were to be.

On

On our return home my mother was lavish in her praises on Mr. Villars, whom she stiled what indeed every one allowed him to be, one of the most accomplished and agreeable young gentlemen in the kingdom.

In this I joined her with a readiness that seemed at first to astonish her; but recollecting myself, I finished the encomium by saying, that he reminded me so powerfully of Mr. Stanley, that I should always value him above every young gentleman of our acquaintance, were it only upon that account.

This conclusion I judged necessary to preclude all suspicion of levity on my part, and to obviate at the same time

any attempt to seduce me from the man on whom my heart was unalterably fixed, though I must confess that I saw then no reason to suspect that such a design was in agitation.

The party to Ranelagh took place accordingly. Notwithstanding the regard I bore to Mr. Stanley, female vanity did not renounce its empire over me so far, as to make me insensible to the homage that was paid to my charms. I was, as I have already said, what my mother had once been. That was sufficient to insure a croud of admirers wherever I appeared; but, like her too, I had an air of reservedness, which kept them at a great distance.

The

The report of this party had drawn several of our acquaintance to Ranelagh. Among them were my aunt, the baronet's lady, with her son, a tall comely youth, who, in compliance with his mother's desire, more perhaps than with his own, complimented me with his attendance wherever he could find me, much against my inclinations.

Mr. Villars, by what means I know not, had received an intimation that this cousin of mine paid his addresses to me, and that I gave him a favourable reception. This intelligence he dreaded was more authentic, as this young gentleman joined me, with his aunt, in the most familiar manner, as soon as they had entered the rotunda.

I soon perceived Mr. Villars's mistake, by the eagerness with which he watched the looks and deportment of my cousin. Though, as I have already declared, my fidelity was unimpaired, I could not but enjoy the competition between these two admirers. It continued the whole evening; and when we parted, I could plainly perceive that Mr. Villars was deeply concerned, and had lost much of his sprightliness and gaiety.

But he was not of a complexion to give me up without having strove to the utmost to retain me. The lady at whose house we first met, and to whom he opened his mind relating to me, was so partial to him, that she soon
after

after contrived to bring us together on a party of pleasure designed for that purpose.

Windsor was the place proposed. The party consisted of that lady and her sister's family, composed of a son and two daughters. My mother accompanying me, we amounted, with Mr. Villars and his kind friend, to eight, which was just a fit number for two coaches.

Mr. Villars took place in that which carried me. The joy he felt at being in my company was so visible, that it pervaded his whole behaviour, and rendered him so engaging, that I could not refuse him all the good-humour I
was

was mistress of. It put him into raptures, and I could not but feel disquietude at his being so much enamoured with me.

While we were employed in viewing the apartments of the castle, he took that opportunity to avow the very high opinion he had conceived of me, adding that he could not but envy the happiness of that young gentleman, whose possession of my good graces he had been witness of at Ranelagh.

I was not pleased with the liberty of his expression, and remained sometime silent. Not chusing however by my silence to confirm his suspicion in that matter, I answered with some coldness
and

and disdain, that whoever possessed my good graces, that gentleman was not he.

Such an answer was far from mortifying to a man who thought my cousin was the only rival he had to dread. He little imagined at that time that another rival existed, whom it was not in the power of any competitor to remove from my heart.

Pleased however with an intelligence that made him then completely happy, he assumed such a degree of vivacity, and said so many civil things to me, that the displeasure I had felt and signified soon gave way to the satisfaction I received from the cheerfulness and
flow

flow of spirits with which he overflowed during the whole day.

In our return to town, Lady Courtney, Mr. Villars's friend, entreated my mother, who had some time past enjoyed but an indifferent state of health, to spend a month or two during the ensuing summer at a country house some miles from London, the situation of which was esteemed remarkably healthy. The cordiality with which the invitation was given prevailed upon my mother to accept of it.

I had no doubt of the friendship and kind wishes of Mrs. Courtney towards my mother; but I was no less convinced that Mr. Villars was the instigator

gator of this invitation, in order to procure himself the opportunity of seeing me. Possibly my mother saw it well as myself; but though she might as not desire that I should falsify my vows to Mr. Stanley, yet when she considered the uncertainties of various denomination that stood between him and me, she was not displeased to see me provided with more than one admirer, especially such a one as Mr. Villars.

CHAPTER VII.

MISS WOODVILLE LOSES HER PARENTS, AND MEETS WITH FURTHER SORROWS—HER ILLNESS, AND RECOVERY.

THE summer was now arrived, and the time for our removal to Lady Courtney's approaching. As my mother and myself were one evening walking in our garden, a servant came running to us in the most violent agitation.

tation. He was at first unable to speak: he came out at last only with these words—Mr. Woodville, Mr. Woodville, madam—and could say no more. As he was booted, and seemed as if just alighted from his horse, we made no doubt of some fatal accident having befallen my father. Our apprehensions were but too well founded: he had lately purchased a very fine horse, but a most vicious one: having taken the resolution to break the spirit of the animal himself, he had ridden him that day to a friend's house at some distance from town, where he had dined. On his return the horse was unhappily seized with one of his vicious fits, and proved unmanageable: my father was flung from the saddle, and his head

head pitching against a stone, the skull was fractured. He was brought home speechless and insensible; and notwithstanding the exertions of the most skillful surgeons that could be procured, he never came to himself any more, and died the next day.

The sudden shock of this terrible accident proved equally fatal to my mother. Added to the lingering condition she had been in, from an illness contracted through a neglected cold, it confined her immediately to her bed. Here she languished the remainder of the summer, and resigned her breath in her childrens' arms in the beginning of autumn.

While

While she lay in that melancholy condition, neither my brother nor I forsook her a moment; and she had the satisfaction of being convinced, by the dutifulness of our behaviour, how tenderly she was beloved by both.

My brother was now in his twenty-third year. He was a handsome portly youth; but his modesty and reserve, though they did not conceal his good qualities, yet prevented them from appearing with that splendor which becomes the possession of them in a man. He was however highly respected among his acquaintance, the youthful part of whom entertained such an opinion of his judgment and integrity, that they universally made him their confidan

confidant, and submitted to his advice with a deference that did uncommon credit to his character.

The loss of two such parents as our's was a source of great affliction to both, which was heightened by the manner of losing them. We both retired from our house to that of Mrs. Brenton, the worthy aunt of whom I made first mention.

The preference we gave to her, who was the least opulent of the three, awakened the jealousy of the other two. The designs they had formed upon me were sufficient motives to keep me from their society as much as decency would permit, and I the seldom

domer visited them, as they seemed highly to resent the choice we had made of their sister, who was the youngest of the three.

We tarried the whole winter at Mrs. Brenton's, and it was with no little difficulty that we were able to recover gradually from the grief we experienced from the lamentable catastrophe that had brought our beloved parents to an untimely grave.

In the ensuing spring we determined, together with our aunt, who now stood us in the stead of our mother, to go into the country, and reside there during the summer.

While

While we were preparing to execute our intentions, Mr. Villars, who had from motives of delicacy refrained from visiting us during our long retreat from the gay world after the misfortune that had befallen us, now thought proper to resume the designs he had formed upon me.

To this purpose, having previously acquainted Mrs. Brenton that, with her's and my brother's permission, he would take the liberty of paying his respects to me, he waited upon us accordingly, and was received with the politeness and attention that were due to his rank and character.

The

The first interview passed without any explicit mention of what he had chiefly in view: he condoled with us on our loss, and expressed an earnest desire to cultivate an acquaintance with my aunt and ourselves.

So polite a request could not be refused to such a person. We all three professed too sincere a regard for so worthy a young gentleman, not to be duly sensible of the honour he did us.

From the cordiality of the reception he met with, he was led to conclude that he should not be unsuccessful in his wishes; and he exerted himself to his utmost in order to secure the good

will of my aunt. In this he succeeded so well, that she could not forbear acknowledging that were Mr. Stanley to fail me, Mr. Villars was the only man that ought to replace him.

Though I did not give my assent to the supposition, yet I found by the experience I was daily collecting from the various transactions of life, that it was in the order of possibilities. I could not therefore blame my aunt for making it.

Encouraged by the good opinion which he found that my aunt entertained in his behalf, he laid his heart open to her, and recommended his case to her patronage: but what was his surprise,

surprise, when she informed him how matters stood respecting me, how early my affections had been pre-occupied, and how steadily I adhered to a choice which, though made in my infancy, had long remained as deeply rooted, as if it had been formed in riper years, and was now more firmly fixed than ever, since the late renewal of the connexion with my lover about two years since.

The singularity of the adventure struck him. But after recovering from the astonishment it had excited, he said that notwithstanding what he heard, I had too much sense and good-nature to forbid him indulge the hope, that were any sinister accident to de-

prive me of my first admirer, he might have the felicity of being the second.

To this my aunt replied with a hearty assurance of her consent, and that no other man, while he breathed, should in that case receive the least assistance from her, in his endeavours to obtain the hand of her niece.

They had just ended the conversation, when I returned from a visit I had paid that morning to my aunt the captain's lady. As my looks denoted much grief and concern, my aunt and Mr. Villars kindly enquired the cause: but I was so dejected, that I hardly attended to what they were saying; and laying
my

my head against a chair, I suddenly burst out into tears, lamenting and sobbing as if my heart would break.

After having given a long vent to my sorrow—Oh! my dear aunt, I exclaimed, you don't know what has befallen me: but recollecting that Mr. Villars was present, I refrained, and shaking my head, bewailed the cruelty of my fate in low and broken accents, but without specifying the cause of my unhappiness.

Mr. Villars rightly judging that my delicacy would not permit me to unfold the particulars of my case in his presence, prudently withdrew, begging me to be convinced that whatever

calamity I suffered, he sincerely shared it with me; and, were it possible, would gladly take the burden upon himself.

I thanked him for his sympathy in the warmest terms I could find, and notwithstanding the distress of my mind, clearly perceived that he felt great satisfaction at my words.

When he was departed, I gave a fresh vent to my grief; and pulling a letter out of my pocket—There, said I, there is the fidelity of men. My aunt, after perusing it, stood equally astonished with myself. It was written from a gentleman in Jamaica to my uncle-in-law the captain, informing
him

him that Mr. Stanley had connected himself in matrimony with a lady of great fortune in that island.

The captain had contracted an acquaintance with Mr. Stanley, whom, on account of his bravery and skill in seamanship, he much valued. Though he would gladly have seen me married to his son, yet he had too much honesty in his nature, to desire that any violence should be laid upon my inclinations; and, next to his son, he had always recommended Mr. Stanley.

But this intelligence making so material an alteration in favour of his wishes, he had communicated it to me

that morning; telling me at the same time, that he hoped I would not, whenever I thought proper to dispose of myself, seek for a connexion out of the family, and that he should esteem it a real honour to call so accomplished a young lady his daughter.

Had I been disposed to chuse a partner out of my two cousins, I should certainly have preferred his son to that of the baronet. He was of a far more open and manly disposition, and had, I believe, a sincere affection for me; but the continual persecutions of my two aunts had sickened me of both their sons.

When

When my aunt had perused this letter—Could I, said she, persuade myself that your uncle could be guilty of such baseness, I should suspect it was a forgery ; but the correspondent who signs it, is too well known for your uncle to dare employ his name to so villainous an intent.

A long silence ensued, during which my brother, who had also been abroad upon a visit, returned. The indignation he expressed was, contrary to his usual temper, violent in the extreme : his affection for me drove him into an excess of passion which he had never felt before.

The result of the deliberation that now took place in consequence of this event was, that I should summon my pride to assist me on an occasion where I had been so grossly insulted ; and that I should not give way to grief for the loss of a man who had proved himself so unworthy of such a woman as me.

What rendered Mr. Stanley unpardonable in my eyes, was that he knew how many advantageous offers I had rejected for his sake. I had minutely acquainted him with every circumstance of this kind, and given him the most positive promises that I would preserve myself for him in spite of all difficulties

difficulties and temptations. To be thus meanly forsaken was a treatment that roused my resentment to the highest pitch, and made me determine to despise and forget him, as one that was wholly lost to every sense and impression of honour and common honesty.

But notwithstanding the contempt I felt for Mr. Stanley, the whirlwind of different passions that now distracted my mind was more than I could bear. I endeavoured during some days to suppress the violence of the emotions I was continually suffering; but they were too powerful to be overcome. I was in consequence seized with a fever, which rendered me delirious

several days. My aunt and brother gave me over, and Mr. Villars, I was afterwards informed, was so affected with my situation, that his own health was greatly hurt upon the occasion.

After struggling some weeks with the most dangerous illness that ever assailed me, through the unremitting care and attention of my aunt and brother, I began at length to recover the health of my body, but the peace of my mind did not return with equal pace: my indignation was often disturbing my tranquillity: love too, I found, was not sufficiently subdued to enable me to hold my deceiver in proper contempt. It was a long time before I thoroughly conquered my weakness, and brought myself

myself to think of him without discomposure.

In the mean while, Mr. Villars had by his assiduities during my illness, and the unfeigned sorrow he manifested at my sufferings, so entirely won the heart of my brother and aunt, that they determined to befriend him to the utmost of their power in his addresses to me. They had the prudence indeed to wait until I was so far recovered from my mental as well as bodily indisposition, as to have resumed a good part of my native cheerfulness.

They began by acquainting me with what solicitude Mr. Villars had daily attended in person to inquire after my condition,

condition, and with what tender anxiety he watched the progress of my sickness, and of my recovery; with what dejection he saw the one, and with what transports he met the other: that the agitations he underwent upon this occasion, had at last confined him to his bed, and brought on a fit of illness.

The resentment I bore Mr. Stanley rendered this intelligence far from unacceptable. I pondered on the difference that appeared between him and Mr. Villars. The disinterested attachment of the one, and the faithfulness of the other: the high rank and affluent fortune of the first, together with his great qualities, and the vast
expec-

expectations to which they entitled him, began now to offer themselves to my imagination in all their pomp and splendor. The title of countess, and the honours annexed to his name and family,—things, which before Mr. Stanley's infidelity had no weight with me, now assumed a different form, and presented themselves with so much lustre, that they quite dazzled my ideas, and turned the scale entirely in the favour of Mr. Villars.

I did not however immediately determine to give him any explicit encouragement. A remnant of the consciousness and reserve, which I inherited from my mother's temper, impelled me to put off for a time the receiving of

of his address; nor will I disown that the wound which my love for Mr. Stanley had made was far from being entirely close. It was healing indeed, but would occasionally cause much pain. True passion, when of many years continuance, requires perhaps as long a space for total eradication. Experience proved it in my case.

I had often heard my mother say, that it was usual in Italy for young ladies crossed in love to withdraw from the world into convents, in order to obtain a cure for the distress of their minds, by recurring to the assistance of religious exercises. This idea now struck me powerfully. Solitude of almost any kind was now become preferable

to

to society. The attachment to my aunt and brother were the only tie that rendered life supportable; and though at intervals Mr. Villars claimed a share in my thoughts, it was but a slight and transitory one. I still brooded over the disappointment I had met with, and bewailed it as one does the loss of an estate which has long been dependant on, and of which one is deprived when it is least expected.

Mr. Villars was now become a familiar visitant at our house. My aunt and brother were fond of his company and conversation beyond that of any other person, and he returned their predilection with the most unfeigned sincerity.

sincerity. They all three strove to make my time pass agreeably, and they succeeded in some degree. The native festivity of my disposition generally triumphed over the gloominess arising from the accident that had befallen me; but it sometimes gave way, and often in the midst of the pastimes that were provided for me, I suddenly became pensive and melancholy in the extreme.

I cannot sufficiently express the delicacy of Mr. Villars upon these occasions. He sympathized with my feelings in so polite and affectionate a manner, that I must frankly acknowledge it contributed powerfully to mitigate

tigate their acuteness. I was fully-sensible of the care and discretion with which he poured the balm of comfort into my wounds; and though I might seem absent at the time, I took due notice of the pain and anxiety with which he beheld my situation.

Frequently did I ponder on the happiness I should have enjoyed from his attachment, had I never been acquainted with Mr. Stanley. As often did I wish that I had never known this latter. I strove at the same time to argue myself into the propriety of banishing him for ever from my thoughts. Reason taught me the necessity of doing it; but—Argument and Reason, what are you

you to Love? I repeatedly determined that I would be governed by them alone; but my determinations were fruitless; passion always returned, and in a moment conquered all my resolution.

And yet I cannot give the name of love to what I felt. It was rather the remembrance of the delicious sensations I had enjoyed from my past affection for Mr. Stanley. Him, I can safely aver, that I despised, and even abhorred. It was therefore a sorrow for the deprivation of what had constituted my felicity, mixed with a resentment and hatred of him that had deprived me of it.

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This however experience teaches to be a most powerful impression. While it lasts it engrosses the faculties of those it preys upon, and excludes all aptitude to receive any other. Hence we daily see, that persons who have been deeply in love, though they retain not any regard for those who have been the objects of their passion, and can hold them in due contempt when they have been guilty of falshood, nevertheless persist in lamenting their destiny, almost in the same manner as if Death had robbed them of those objects, or misfortunes torn them away.

I continued invariably in this unfortunate state of mind. The assiduities of
Mr.

Mr. Villars, though far from disagreeable, made no other impression upon me than that of gratitude and friendship. He certainly had them both in the highest degree, could such a possession have contented him. But he was too passionate a lover to be satisfied with such a return. As he loved me to distraction, my love alone could prove an adequate retribution, and this he plainly saw was yet at a great distance, if ever, to be attained.

CHAPTER VIII.

MISS WOODVILLE RETIRES TO A
CONVENT—CHARACTER OF HER
COUSIN MISS BRENTON.

THE idea of retiring to a convent
still occupied me. I frequently
grieved that there were no such institu-
tions in England. I considered them as a
sure relief to afflicted minds, wherein,
divested from worldly cares, and totally
taken up with pious meditations, the
soul

soul was at full leisure to attend solely to the cure of its diseases, and to derive that consolation and advice from religion, which no other motives will so quickly produce.

Full of these thoughts, I disclosed them one day to my aunt. I took the opportunity of a letter which she had just received from her daughter, who was then in a convent at Brussels. My aunt was perusing this letter with a seeming satisfaction that convinced me the contents of it must be agreeable.

What a tranquil and placid life do those persons lead, said I, who reside in the convents abroad. I have often observed how cheerfully those letters are
indited

indited that come from the ladies in those places. They express a content and serenity which are seldom found in the correspondence of people who live at large in the world, who are besieged by such a multiplicity of cares, that their very letters partake of the hurry and embarrassments of their situation: whatever gaiety they may assume, it is, one may say, only the produce of their pen. Elegance and good breeding may dictate their expressions; but in spite of what they may affect, truth breaks through all, and one may, through the veil of assumed festivity which is thrown over their thoughts and language, discover that all is not sound at bottom.

As this was a stile of speaking I had never used before, my aunt gazed at me with astonishment. Augusta, said she, have you so little spirit as to suffer the falshood of a man whom you should despise, to drive you into a nunnery!—No, I answered, I will never become a slave; and mean to preserve both my body and mind in my own possession; but I do not think that a temporary retirement from the public world can prove of any detriment to one that has undergone such trials in it: I consider it as a harbour wherein I may refit my shattered vessel before I continue the voyage of life.

I am not displeased with your simile, she replied, but I do not apprehend
that

that a young lady at your time of life should hide herself from society. You are now nineteen, and instead of retreating from, you are in honour and duty bound to act your part on the open stage of the world, and not to bury your many excellent qualities in a convent, which is no more at your years, whatever may be pretended, but a receptacle for indolence and inactivity, and ought never to be inhabited but by infirmity and age.

She spoke this with a firm composed voice, and like one convinced of the propriety of what she said; adding immediately, the proof that I speak what I think is, that though my Nancy is but eighteen, I mean to make

her my companion in a very short time ; left, by remaining longer in such an abode, she should contract an habit of inaction, and a taste for solitude and a still life.

I made no further reply, but secretly resolved that no reasonings should prevent me from executing what I had proposed. I was now in my twentieth year, and thought myself intitled, on a variety of accounts, to judge of the propriety of my own actions.

Conformably to these ideas, I acquainted my brother and aunt that it was my earnest desire, that they would permit me to cross over to the Continent, and pass some time at Brussels,

sels, in company with Miss Brenton; with whom I promised, at the same time, to return to England in the fall of the year; which was the term fixed by my aunt for the recal of her daughter.

As both my brother and aunt knew that I had for some time entertained views of this kind, they answered my request with great lovingness of expression; but shewed much reluctance in complying with it; and insisted, though in a most fond and tender manner, that my absence from England should not exceed the term I had proposed.

Mr. H 3

Mr. Villars, on hearing of my determination to go abroad, applied himself in the most serious manner to prevent it. He urged the danger of leaving me in the discomposed state of my mind, to the influence of such persons as preside in convents. My fortune, he represented, was an allurements they could hardly resist. Nothing, in all likelihood, would be omitted to induce me to abandon my religion and my country, was it only for the sake of getting possession of such a prize.

These reasonings made a strong impression upon my aunt and brother. They imparted them to me: but I made light of all such objections. My mind was so taken up with the enjoyment of the calm

calm and innocent pleasures I should experience in my retreat, that no dissuasions from my purpose were of any avail.

I could not however prevail upon my brother to oppose Mr. Villars's accompanying him with my aunt, in escorting me to Brussels. He told me explicitly, that notwithstanding my present averfeness to the world, he doubted not I should in due time be reconciled to it; and that it behoved him to secure to me such a protector through life as Mr. Villars. I ought not therefore to disoblige him in a request that proved so strongly his attachment, and did me at the same time so great honour.

As there was certainly truth in this allegation, I yielded to my brother's solicitations, and permitted Mr. Villars to attend me to Brussels, where I took my abode in the convent of the Benedictine Nuns in that city.

Notwithstanding the firmness of mind with which I had set out, and preserved during the journey, when the hour of parting with my aunt and brother came, my resolution almost forsook me: it seemed as if I was on the point of being relinquished by my best friends and advisers, and left alone to encounter with the dangers of an unknown place and people.

Mr.

Mr. Villars came in for a share of my sensations at this juncture. His behaviour to me had been altogether so affectionate and so noble, that I could not refrain from taking his hand of my own accord, and thanking him in the warmest terms for the high regard he had shewn me. I added, laying my hand upon my heart, that I sincerely wished it might ever be in my power, as much as it was in my inclination, to requite him as he deserved. My words made his eyes glisten with joy: he took my hand and kissed it in the most fervent, though most respectful manner.

I followed the carriage that conveyed them away as far as it was in sight,

and then throwing my arms about Miss Brenton's neck, I embraced her with all the warmth that accompanies a friendship founded on similitude of situation, and a conviction that she was the principal source of comfort I was now to look for in my new situation.

The parting had taken place at the house of an Irish lady of fortune and character, who resided at Brussels, and whose husband was an officer of rank in the Austrian service. She had formerly been acquainted with my aunt in their younger days; and a sincere and unaltered friendship had subsisted between them ever since.

To

To her care and protection Miss Brenton had been, and I also was now, committed. Though she was a zealous Catholic, her zeal was tempered with so much good breeding and discretion, that, conformably to her promise to Mrs. Brenton, she had never spoken a disrespectful word of the Protestant religion in presence of her niece, nor ever did before me.

Towards the evening we repaired all three to the convent; where she resigned us into the hands of the ladies belonging to it. I was received with the most affectionate cordiality by them. They had been made previously acquainted with my story by the Irish

H 6

lady,

lady, and seemed to compassionate my case with the utmost tenderness.

I rested little that night. In the morning Miss Brenton and I were summoned to breakfast with the principal lady in the convent. She was, notwithstanding her age, which was about sixty, a lively woman: her manners and language denoted her to have been excellently educated, and thoroughly conversant in the polite world. She was very honourably born, and related to some very illustrious English families. Her cheerfulness was remarkable. She conversed indiscriminately on every subject that was proper for the sex to be acquainted with; and though her piety

piety was manifest, it had nothing disagreeable or forbidding.

She frankly told us that in her young days she too had partaken of the gaieties of life, till the experience of their emptiness had wearied her patience. She blamed no person for their inclinations, and therefore thought she had an equal right to indulge her own in embracing a monastic life; of which she assured us with an air of sincerity that carried conviction with it, that she had never yet found any cause to repent.

Miss Brenton seemed a peculiar favourite of this worthy lady; and when I have given her portrait, no body will

will wonder that she should have been the favourite of all who knew her. She was full eighteen, but appeared older. This might be owing to the serious cast of her countenance. Her size was precisely that due medium between the tall and the low, which Nature bestows when she proposes perfection of symmetry. Her shape struck one with admiration at its delicacy. Her face was the picture of health and liveliness: her eyes were blue, and though full of softness and benignity, had nevertheless a keen and starry resplendency that fixed the attention of every beholder. Her aspect bespoke penetration and wit; of which last I never knew, throughout my life, man or woman that possessed a more copious

pious share. Mr. Villars himself, to whom the world ascribed so much, did not exceed her.

To these endowments she added what was far more valuable, a candid upright heart, above all dissimulation, and a love of truth which never forsook her even in the midst of her gayest humours. Her festivity was such, that it communicated itself like electricity to all present. She was the delight of every company she frequented. When Mrs. Morrison (the Irish lady under whose tuition we were placed) obtained permission for our spending a few days out of the convent, it was with difficulty the acquaintance to whom she introduced

introduced her, would consent to her leaving them.

The first instant Miss Brenton and myself saw each other, a prepossession in our reciprocal favour was conceived, which has never been obliterated. We perceived our minds mutually as it were by intuition, and rightly conjectured that we were born for the strictest union that can take place between two of the sex. Our inclinations, our designs, our little adventures, all our secrets in short, became known to each other.

What highly contributed to render this lovely girl a favourite with the
Lady

Lady Prioress, and indeed with all the community, was the readiness with which she complied with all the regulations of the convent. She assisted with great devotion and respect at all their religious exercises, and conformed to their ways and practices in all particulars, excepting confession and communion, which her mother had expressly forbidden her to submit to upon any account, and had stipulated should never be enjoined her.

Notwithstanding the apprehensions expressed by Mr. Villars in regard to the danger of seduction from the motive of appropriating my fortune, I never met with any attempt of the kind. The Father Confessor of the convent was

was a sensible, polite, and venerable old gentleman, of the Benedictine Order. He often visited at Mrs. Morrison's, where he was received with great respect, which indeed he fully merited by the agreeableness of his manners and conversation, and the propriety of his behaviour.

He always expressed much affection for Miss Brenton and me, politely wishing that he could see us of the same mind with himself in those matters wherein our religious education differed. But whenever he thought proper to enlarge upon those topics, he did it with so much decency, and in a method so distant from all acrimony, that it always proved to me a matter
of

of entertainment no less than of edification. His arguments shewed him a man of much erudition, and the knowledge I acquired by attending to him, though it did not make me a profelyte to his opinions, yet conduced not a little to increase my stock of useful information.

I had now remained near eight months in this agreeable recess. I had entirely regained my serenity; and (what appeared of equal, if not more consequence) I was become almost indifferent to Mr. Stanley; of whom I now could speak with the utmost composure. The connexion between us seemed like a dream; out of which I was at length awakened. I owed this tran-

tranquillity of mind to my dear Miss Brenton, who took much pains to rally me out of the hopeless perplexity (as she called it) to which I had submitted with so much weakness.

Her efforts produced their desired effect. By the time our departure from Brussels was approaching, though I had contracted much affection for several ladies both in and out of the convent, I began to turn my thoughts towards England, and felt a peculiar pleasure in the expectation of revisiting it soon.

CHAPTER IX.

MISS WOODVILLE AND MISS BRENTON

CARRIED OFF BY TWO

FRENCH OFFICERS.

IT was now the middle of September. Miss Brenton and I had dined at Mrs. Morrison's, where we often spent a day. The weather being remarkably fine, and her house being contiguous to the park, we both went out to take

an

an airing there, proposing to return at tea-time. After walking there about an hour, the day beginning to decline, and the company to depart, we also thought it time to withdraw. To this purpose, while we were fauntering along homewards through a solitary walk, two men accosted us, close muffled up in troopers' cloaks: they both pulled off their hats in the most respectful manner, informed us they perfectly knew who we were, and that no treatment was intended unbecoming our rank and character; but that we must immediately, without the least hesitation, accompany them. As we were alone and defenceless, and the two men (whom we found afterwards to be French dragoons) seemed resolutely deter-

determined to compel us, if needful, we went with them, trembling all the way, and wondering how this would end; while they continued assuring us that our honour and our persons were in perfect safety.

They led us to a lonely street adjoining to the park, where we found a post-chaise with four horses, attended by two persons well mounted, who held the two horses belonging to the men who had forced us to follow them.

They hurried us (though I must acknowledge it was with the civilest language) into the post-chaise, and drove off immediately with the utmost precipitation.

cipitation. When we came to the town gate, Miss Brenton attempted to let down the blind on her side, as I endeavoured to do on mine, in order to call for assistance, but we found them so fast, that it was impossible to move them; and though we shrieked aloud, no help was given us. Matters, no doubt, had been preconcerted, so as to let the carriage pass without difficulty.

We travelled all night without stopping any where, except to change horses. On the return of day, one of our attendants came to the chaise door, which had entered the yard of an inn, and with an air of great politeness and dignity assured us, that we had nothing to

to dread, and that our treatment should prove entirely consistent with the strictest respect.

The person who spoke to us was a handsome well-looking man: his companion, who seemed to bear a share in this adventure, repeated his words: he was no less comely a person: they both had crosses of St. Louis; by which we discovered they were French officers. The two men who had accosted us in the park attended them; and we found that it was in vain to expect any deliverance at the present.

After changing horses, we continued travelling with all speed till ten o'clock; when stopping at a small inn at a great

distance from any other house, they all alighted; and the two officers opening the chaise door, entreated us to alight also, and not refuse them the satisfaction to take some refreshment with them.

It may be well imagined, that notwithstanding the assurances given to us at first, we spent a most uncomfortable night. Whenever the chaise stopped, we dreaded the crisis of our fate to be at hand. It was in the mean time a great consolation to find ourselves together, though we knew not how soon we might be parted. Happily for us, at the same time, Nature had endowed us both with an uncommon share of courage for our sex: and we had both determined

mined to lose our lives in the defence of each other, sooner than part with our honour.

Had we not been assailed in so sudden a manner as to deprive us at first of our presence of mind, it would have been a hard task to carry us off. But after having had sufficient time to recollect ourselves during the course of a long night, which afforded us, one may think, not an instant of rest, we resolutely came to the determination already mentioned. To which purpose we had armed ourselves with two small pen-knives that were in our cases.

Having however travelled all night without finding our apprehensions in the

least realized, and being convinced by the behaviour of the two officers that they had no intentions of that kind, we began to recover from the fright into which they had put us, not however without feeling excessive uneasiness in what manner this very strange adventure would terminate.

What made us now most unhappy, was the grief and lamentation that must ensue at Mr. Morrison's and at the convent on our sudden disappearance, and the shock that Mrs. Brenton must feel on hearing of it. Both these evils however we had proposed to remedy by writing them the first moment we were mistresses of pen, ink, and paper. We also agreed to behave with the utmost

most condescension to the persons in whose hands we were, while they kept within the bounds of decency, and did not attempt to separate us from each other.

Having thus previously settled in what manner to act, we condescendingly alighted from the chaise, not refusing to accept of the assistance of the two officers, who offered us their hands with an air of submissiveness and respect that struck us the more forcibly, on contrasting it with the methods they had used to get us into their possession.

They conducted us into a very well furnished room, where a large fire was lighted, and a plentiful table spread for

our reception. As soon as we were entered we both immediately seated ourselves as it had been agreed between us, and I demanded with a firm tone of voice, and with as much dignity as I could summon into my aspect, by what authority they had ventured to treat us in this manner.

The answer they gave was an extraordinary one indeed. They both fell upon their knees before us, and putting a pistol into each of our hands, told us, that if we thought them deserving of death, it was at our option to inflict it upon them; we might do it with the utmost safety, as the violence they had committed would fully justify us.

Miss

Miss Brenton replied with great nobleness of spirit, that however they might merit the punishment they submitted to, which they most certainly did, yet they knew by experience, that it was not the temper of the English to trample upon a prostrate foe.

This reply seemed to strike them both with astonishment. After some silence they rose at the same time, and one of them said to the other—My dear friend, such an answer and such a behaviour shews that we were not mistaken, when we told Mrs. Morrison that the whole world could not produce two women superior to these two.

The name of Mrs. Morrison immediately recalled to my memory who these gentlemen were. We had seen them three or four times at that lady's in the spring of the year. They had taken Brussels in their way to join the French army, in which they bore a distinguished rank, being colonels of dragoons. They were men of birth and large fortune, in the prime of life, and we had heard many things highly to their honour.

Being inseparable friends and companions, they visited together at Mrs. Morrison's, with whose husband they were intimately acquainted. Having seen us at that lady's, and received that
advan-

advantageous account of our character, which her kind partiality to us induced her to give to every body, they had fallen what is called desparately in love with us, and being men of an enterprising disposition, and impatient at the same time of the delays and difficulties which they apprehended in a regular way of courtship, they had judged proper to adopt this extraordinary method of making their intentions known to us.

To the very high compliment which they paid us I made answer, that it was very unaccountable they should have so little respected the superiority they were pleased to attribute to us, as to have treated us in so cavalier and dis-

respectful a manner; that if they were real men of honour, and deserving of that character of generosity which the public bestowed upon French officers, and in which they so much prided themselves, they would instantly release us, and restore us to the liberty of either accepting or rejecting their addresses as we should see fitting: this was the only atonement we required, as it was the least they could make, if they held us worthy of that high opinion which they professed for us.

In making this request I did not expect they would comply with it after the lengths they had gone: nor did they even make any answer to it for some moments: when one of them in a
most

most empaffioned accent exclaimed—
Life is not the object of our defires, if
it must be purchafed with the lofs of
thofe who are dearer to us than our
exiftence: we are two friends who hide
nothing from each other; we can mu-
tually vouch with what eagernels we
have fought death in every fhape it
could be found with honour, during the
whole courfe of the laft campaign, from
the perfuafion of the obftacles we fhould
find in obtaining your hands: Fate
has, you fee, preferved us in fpite of
our endeavours to perish: pity there-
fore, dear ladies, a paffion which has,
we acknowledge, in fome fhape de-
prived us of our reafon; but confider
at the fame time that we have loft it

upon your account; and do not hate us for having conceived the most violent attachment for you the first moment we saw you: long have we struggled in vain to suppress it; but when we reflect on the purity of our intentions, we hope that the goodness of your hearts will furnish you with motives for looking with compassion upon the extravagance of which we have been guilty.

There was something in this plea which, unjustifiable as their conduct had been, was altogether soothing to female vanity: it was spoken with so much apparent, and I doubt not real sincerity, and accompanied with so much

much gracefulness of manner, that it was not lost upon either Miss Brenton or me.

Being now convinced that they were both men of too much honour to harbour any thoughts of violence to our persons, we began to cherish bolder ideas than we had ventured to do at first. We made however no answer to their last words; but asked very peremptorily for pen, ink, and paper; telling them that if they regarded us as much as they pretended, they would not refuse us the gratification of informing our friends that we were alive and well, and in such hands as would secure us from all kind of ill usage.

This

This last expression had an immediate effect upon both their countenances; it cleared up the dejectedness of their looks, and brightened them as much as if they had received news of the most agreeable importance.

We now sat down together, Miss Brenton and I, and gave a very circumstantial account of the whole affair to Mrs. Morrison; taking especial care to inform her that the authors of our seizure and detention were two French officers of rank, whom we had seen at her house last spring: but though we particularized every thing else, we did not mention the name of the place we were at, nor of the officers themselves, which

which proved afterwards the cause of much perplexity.

When we had folded and sealed the letter, we paid them the compliment of delivering it into their own hands, desiring they would procure the quickest dispatch: this they solemnly promised to do with the greatest punctuality, and kept their words accordingly.

Having settled a point which had caused us much uneasiness, we told them with a firm accent, and no uncheerful look, that relying upon that propriety and decency of behaviour of which we confessed they had not been wanting, except in the seizing us in so unwarrantable a manner, we would venture

to

to sit down and partake in their company of what had been prepared for our refreshment. I hardly can express the satisfaction that appeared in their whole demeanour upon this declaration.

While we were at table, Miss Brenton asked them, whither they meant to carry us, and in what country we then were? We were apprized by their reply, that we were no longer upon Austrian ground; the place where we had stopped being on the borders of France, and in the neighbourhood of Guise in Picardy.

This answer not reaching to the extent of the question, Miss Brenton repeated

peated it; to which the reply was, that one day more would bring us to our journey's end; when the treatment we should experience would equal the most affectionate and tender we had ever met with from our dearest relations.

Notwithstanding this reply did not come home to our enquiry, we rested satisfied and said no more on that subject. I now took upon me to speak in turn, and told them that we did not wish to go any further, were our inclinations to be consulted; that if they would conduct us to Cambray, which was at no great distance, and might be reached before night, we should heartily forgive them all they had done; and as
it

it proceeded from the wildness of their passion, would totally obliterate the offence they had committed from our minds.

Madam, said one of them, will you give us your words of honour, that in case of our compliance, you will permit us to wait upon you in the quality of lovers?

This was a question which struck us instantly with the impropriety of their not having already declared, whom of us respectively they were in love with.

We were not however disposed to ask them for information in this particular, left

lest they should imagine us too readily inclined to listen to them: waving therefore any specific reply, we reiterated our petition relating to Cambridge, adding only that compulsion was not the surest way to a woman's heart, and that when we were at liberty we should know how to behave.

They again repeated that it would be utterly out of our power to complain of the usage we should find; that they meant to introduce us to their friends and family; and to employ their intercession with us: we should know who they were, before they would desire us to favour them with our forgiveness, and allow them the honour of laying their persons and fortune at
our

our feet. They then informed us their names were Tavannes and Chabort; and mentioned other particulars concerning them with which they thought it was proper we should be acquainted.

Finding they were resolute in their first determination, we were silent some time, during which they fixed their eyes upon us with an equal mixture of anxiety and affection.

Information being brought that the chaise was ready, they handed us downstairs with great respect. As we were crossing the yard, we were accosted with great demonstrations of humility by a Capuchin Friar: though he wore a long beard, he was still in the prime
of

of life, and his countenance was that of a gentleman. He had a knapsack across his shoulders : making a low bow, he told us in polite terms, and in exceeding good English, that he was our countryman ; and conjecturing by our looks and features, in which he said he had never once been mistaken, that we were of that happy island, he ventured with all deference and submission to crave our charity for the community to which he belonged ; which he assured us was the poorest in that part of the country, and was at that time, through the general distresses arising from the unsuccessful war with England, in very great indigence.

We

We both felt a strong prepossession in favour of an Englishman thus voluntarily exiled from a country which he seemed to have quitted with regret; and in a condition which denoted that no unworthy motives had led him to forsake it. We made him a decent donation, and told him that were it in our power we should have been glad to have had some conversation with him; but that we were under the necessity of setting off immediately with the two gentlemen whom he now saw accompanying us. I know them well, said he; they have not their betters in their profession, nor in the province they live in: they are constant and generous benefactors to our convent,
and

and I doubt not you know enough of them to be convinced you could not have made a happier choice.

These words convinced us that he either imagined, or had been informed, that we were their wives: neither were we without some suspicion, that the high character he gave them was a concerted business, intended to quiet our minds, and reconcile us to our situation. He told us, however, that he was travelling at present towards the place of their residence; upon which we replied, that we should be highly pleased to see him there.

We had not time to say any more. The two officers, after taking very civil notice

notice of him, and making him both a present of some money, helped us into the chaise.

We drove with all speed during the remainder of the day, and arrived at night at a large and convenient inn, where we soon found that our officers were perfectly known, and were indeed the lords of the manor and village where it stood.

A most agreeable young woman waited upon us as soon as we were alighted, and conducted us to a very elegant apartment; where an elderly woman of a decent motherly appearance received us with tokens of the most profound respect. They told us that
the

the gentlemen under whose protection we travelled, had informed them, that we were desirous of spending the evening entirely alone; for which purpose they were come to receive our commands. After ordering what we thought proper, we sat ourselves down, highly pleased that we should enjoy each other's company undisturbed: nor were we unmindful or unthankful for this mark of the respect our lovers (for such I must call them) shewed us: we had a long conversation about them, a principal part of which turned upon the uncertainty we still remained in which of the two it was our respective lot to have made a conquest of.

The truth was, that saving the seizure and carrying off of our persons, I never witnessed a more decent and gentleman-like behaviour in any men. Their modesty and forbearance was such, that excepting some tender casts of the eye, and the particular circumstance of the same one having always handed each of us in and out of the carriage, we were yet at a loss to fix upon either with a precision that should not admit of a doubt.

The natural vivacity of Miss Brenton had not forsaken her in the midst of this perplexing adventure. As we were now alone, she gave a full scope to it with the more willingness, as we
were

were now perfectly satisfied that the unhappiness of our friends during the interval that would elapse between the first missing of us and the receipt of the letter we had written, would be shortly removed. We had assured them, that there was not the least reason to apprehend any thing for the safety of our persons or of our honour; and that the whole ought rather to be considered as an odd, than as any serious affair.

We entertained ourselves the whole evening and part of the night with conjectures whose favourites we were. This occasioned a world of wit and smartness to flow from the fertile imagination of my fair friend, who after

a variety of guesses hit at last, with her usual sagacity, upon the right person for each.

She had observed that the first gentleman* who opened the chaise-door addressed himself to me in a very particular manner, and that notwithstanding she had spoken to him several times, he still directed the discourse to me : it was he that had presented me with a pistol ; it was he that brought me ink and paper, and put a pen into my hand ; and more than all that, it was he that fell on his knees before me, and made the long apology for the strange conduct to which the excess of his passion had driven him.

Her

* This was Mons. Tavannes.

Her remarks were extremely just: by the same rule that she pointed out who was my lover, she ascertained her own. What was at the same time not displeasing to us, it fell out that each found herself to be the favourite of him she liked best.

It was late next morning before either of us awoke. The fatigue of the journey, added to the subsiding of all apprehensions of personal danger, procured us some hours of very sound rest. Upon ringing the bell, the young woman who had attended us in the evening, made her appearance with the compliments of the two gentlemen, enquiring after our welfare, and ac-

quainting us, that if it was agreeable, they should esteem themselves highly honoured with our company at breakfast in a parlour below, unless we had rather be alone.

As we thought it might appear rather affected to refuse their invitation, we accepted it in a ready and chearful manner. Our acquiescence gave them great satisfaction; and when we entered the room where they waited our coming, the first thing they said after customary civilities had passed, was that the whole of our behaviour in the circumstances they had placed us in, did us so much credit, and shewed our character in so amiable a light, that, instead

of

of bearing them resentment, whatever the issue of this adventure might be, we ought thankfully to remember the opportunity they had afforded us of displaying our worth to so much advantage.

CHAPTER X.

MISS WOODVILLE AND MISS BRENTON INTRODUCED TO THE FAMILY OF THE FRENCH OFFICERS—CHARACTER AND CONDUCT OF THOSE WHO COMPOSED IT.

AFTER signifying our sense of the compliment they were pleased to pay us, we breakfasted all together very cordially. After which they informed

us

us that in about a couple of hours they intended to resign us into the hands of their sisters, whom they had sent for to that intent.

We were equally surpris'd and pleas'd at this intelligence, and could not forbear letting them know, in the warmest terms, that this instance and proof of the honourableness of their intentions, made us almost forget what was past.

After about two hours spent in a very agreeable conversation, on hearing the rattle of coaches at a distance they both went out, in order to receive their sisters, to whom they had written a copious detail (as we afterwards found) of the adventure in which they had

embarked, and had now made such a progress.

Miss Brenton, as soon as they were gone, took notice, as I had already done within myself, how elegantly they were both dressed that morning, and how handsome it made them appear. We both agreed however, that what principally conduced to that appearance, was that no longer looking upon them in the light of our tyrants, we could the more readily discern what was amiable in them, which was clouded before by our resentment and apprehensions.

While we were yet speaking, the two gentlemen entered with their two sisters; who

who curtsying with infinite grace, saluted us both with looks full of compassion and cordiality. They were both tolerably handsome; but their manners were transcendently engaging; an air of distinction accompanied their whole deportment, and conferred a particular merit on every word they spoke.

After staying with us but a short time, both the gentlemen quitted the room, leaving us with their sisters. We related to them in few words all that had happened, doing full justice to the delicacy and respectfulness of their two brothers, and laying all that was odious in this transaction to the wildness of their passion.

The ladies thanked us for the magnanimity with which we shewed ourselves willing to excuse the behaviour of their brothers, which however they confessed was inexcusable, and could only be atoned for by a whole life of the warmest attachment and fidelity; that it would be the pride of their family to adopt us into it, after what they had been told of our character and had seen of our persons; that conformably to the promise made to their brothers, they would intercede for our forgiveness and permission that they might address us on the footing of lovers; that in this however we were at the fullest liberty to act at our own discretion; they had insisted for the most

most perfect freedom in our behalf; it was the condition of their becoming intercessors and mediators in this business.

In order to convince us they were in the strictest earnest, they each took out of their pockets a purse full of louisdores, which they pressed us to accept; telling us at the same time we were free to depart immediately if we chose it; but entreating us most fervently to honour their house and family with our presence, was it only for three or four days, in order to convince those who should see us, that our charms were such that it was no wonder they had deranged the understanding of their brothers.

They

They added that we were the two first women who had been able to make any serious impression upon them; that it had long been the wish of the various branches of their family to see them happily married; that such was the excellence of their character, to say nothing of their fortune, which was very considerable, that they might have commanded the richest heiresses in the province: their conduct till this rash action, had been irreproachable; in their civil and military capacity they stood upon the highest footing of esteem and commendation, and bid fair to rise to the most honourable employments.

I have

I have often heard that a lover's plea is more powerful than all that can be alledged in his favour by another. This may be true where love is mutual; but I am persuaded, unless that be the case, the mediation of a person whom we respect, is far more powerful: I fully experienced this to be true upon the present occasion: what fell from the lips of these two ladies had more weight than all the protestations of their brothers, though I made no doubt of their veracity.

Miss Brenton confessed to me that she was of the same mind as myself; but notwithstanding she paid much deference to the allegations they made in favour of their brothers, still they were out-

outweighed in her apprehensions, as well as in mine, by considerations that appeared of more importance.

The behaviour of these ladies was however so full of tenderness and generosity, that we thought ourselves bound to correspond with their desire that we should accompany them to the residence of their family, on their solemn engagement that we should be mistresses of all our actions, and at freedom to depart whenever we thought proper.

This matter being thus settled, we left the inn, and repaired to the house of the gentleman whom I now found to be, as Miss Brenton had rightly conjectured, my admirer.

It was a stately ancient seat, with a moat round it, that was converted into a garden, and decorated with turrets and battlements; but the apartments were quite modernized, and furnished in the most rich and splendid taste. That which was designed for Miss Brenton and me, was superb indeed: Nothing was wanting in it either of ornament or convenience that cost or art could procure.

The company we found at this place consisted of my admirer's mother, a venerable old lady, who received us both as if we had been her own daughters; his uncle, an aged officer, who had been a major in the French army, and lost a leg in war, and another

another near relation also in years, who was a canon of the cathedral of Rheims, a city that lay not far off the seat.

I cannot sufficiently describe the very great politeness of the reception I met with in this truly hospitable mansion. I ought not to forget mentioning that we came in the coach which brought the two sisters to the inn, and that the two gentlemen escorted us on horseback. After our introduction to the old lady of the house, we were conducted to the apartment that had been prepared for us. Here we found a genteel young woman waiting for us, whom the two sisters had sent for from Rheims that morning: she addressed

us in English at our entrance into the room, told us she was our country-woman, and had left England some years ago in company with her husband, who was an ingenious manufacturer, and had settled at Rheims, where he was lately dead, and where she subsisted on a pension that was allowed her by the magistracy of the place, in consideration of the utility her husband had been of to the manufactory to which he had belonged.

We could not but be duly sensible to these various marks of attention and respect, and found that the words of our two admirers were fulfilled to their utmost extent. After leaving us together a few minutes by ourselves, the

two

two sisters returned with our young English woman carrying a neat basket of curious workmanship, filled with linen and cloaths belonging to my admirer's sister. She was exactly of Miss Brenton's size and make, who being nearly of mine, what fitted the one could easily be made to suit the other.

In consequence of their entreaties we dressed ourselves in the apparel of this lady, and joined the company in the hall where they were assembled for dinner. Here we found our two lovers who presented us to the company as two English ladies of great family, and still greater accomplishments. They said no more than to that purport, but I made no doubt that the adventure

which brought us thither was known to all the company present.

The repast was splendid, and the guests, as usual in France, full of good-humour and festivity: but Miss Brenon and myself, though we took care not to damp the mirth of the company, behaved with that decent reserve which was suitable to our situation.

When dinner was over, my admirer's mother, who discreetly judged that we were not desirous to remain in company with the gentlemen, withdrew to her own apartment with us and the young ladies.

When

When we were all seated—My dear young ladies, said she, addressing herself to Miss Brenton and me, I hold myself highly honoured by your condescending to comply with the invitation of my daughter and her friend, which I assure you was made at my own request, that I might if possible obtain your forgiveness for the affront you have sustained in the strange behaviour of my son and his friend. I feel, that to women of your rank in life, an attempt of this kind must render the perpetrators odious, in spite of all the great qualities they may otherwise possess. I would not endeavour to extenuate the misdemeanour of which they have been guilty; but I would have

you

you at the same time seriously reflect, that youth and love are the two most ungovernable controulers of human nature: if pardon is claimable for excesses, it is chiefly for such as proceed from these two causes; the noblest characters, you well know, are the deepest tinctured with the passion of which you have felt the effects; they who are the greatest slaves to this, are generally the most free from all others, especially the base and selfish passions: this, though it does not justify the irregularities of which men are often guilty in the pursuit of those objects upon which they have their fixed desires, is yet a powerful plea with the sensible and discerning among our sex, while those

those pursuits have an honourable end in view.

To make an application of what I have said to my son and his friend, although they have brought you hither by unfair and illicit means, their intentions, you must now see, are truly honourable. Maternal fondness must naturally be partial; but it is not my voice alone that proclaims the worth of my son and his friend; whoever knows them speaks the same language; I know not one vice that can be laid to their charge; this is the first flaw in their lives; it is for your sake they have been guilty of the only material error they ever committed;
and

and they now submit to the greatest punishment you can inflict upon them, that of losing you for ever; if such should be your determination.

But as such an issue to this affair will, in the forebodings of my mind, be attended with such consequences as I shudder to think of, let me, after pleading for my son and his friend, entreat your compassion for myself, my daughter, and her friend; we are all three equally interested in the happiness of your two lovers; should you reject their addresses, which heaven avert, we see nothing before us but miseries that cannot fail to embitter the remainder of our days; mine indeed will soon have a period; but think

on these two young ladies, like yourselves in the prime of their lives; but who, unlike me who shall meet with a quick release, must drag on a wretched existence for a long term of years.

If it is therefore in your power, if you are not already pre-engaged in such a manner that the laws of God and man will not permit you to recede, let me conjure you not lightly to adhere to any resolutions you may have formed in the height of your repentment; but calmly to consider what happiness you have in your power to confer upon two men of the noblest character who adore you, and what miseries you will avert from the head

of two aged mothers who cherish you as their daughters; and of two deserving young women who love you as their sisters.

I must confess that I never felt so much emotion as while the good old lady was making this speech. As she spoke from conviction, and drew a picture that my own feelings convinced me was not ideal, I could not forbear shedding a flood of tears, in which I was accompanied by Miss Brenton, who was equally affected with myself, and indeed by all present: it was a scene of affliction that I shall never forget; the remembrance of it never failed to melt me into the deepest melancholy.

When the good old lady had finished her discourse, she took hold of Miss Brenton's hand and mine; and looking upon us with an air of benignity that pervaded my whole frame;—May my words find favour with you, said she, and may my family owe its felicity to the two loveliest creatures that England, that country of beauties, ever sent over to this.

This loving compliment somewhat dispelled the gloom which the seriousness of her speech had occasioned. She proposed a walk in the garden; where we were shortly joined by the gentlemen whom we had left in the hall.

Miss

Miss Brenton took particular notice that our two lovers seemed much dejected. We found afterwards that it proceeded from a conversation they had with their relation the canon, who had asserted with great vehemence, that unless we were Roman Catholics, he would never give his consent to his kinsman's being joined in wedlock with me.

Such a declaration on the part of a man who was very rich, and from whom he had great expectations, was the more mortifying, as he not only disapproved of the match on a religious account, but from a scheme he had long had in view, of giving my lover a wife of his own chusing.

His displeasure at our two lovers had occasioned a dispute while they remained at table. He had contained himself while the ladies were present; but the moment we had left the hall as before mentioned, he opened upon them with a violence which, had he not been a churchman, would have probably been attended with serious consequences; and to which, had he not been a relation from whose opulence my admirer hoped to derive large benefit, he would not have submitted a moment.

After reproaching them for the manner in which they had taken possession of our persons in terms the most injurious, he asked them how they pretended

tended to dispose of us, in case a marriage proved impracticable; adding that in his official capacity he would oppose, with all his might, an union with strangers of whom we knew nothing but by mere report.

Such threats from a man, who was a dignitary of importance, threw both our lovers into great perplexity. They answered him with a calmness and submission very unusual for persons of their profession and character, intreating him to weigh dispassionately how cruel it would be to refuse his assent to an action by which only they could repair the injury done to the young ladies in question, and prevent the
affair

affair from being productive of much more mischief than had already been done.

After urging a variety of reasons in order to disarm his wrath, and finding that all their remonstrances were to no purpose, they dropped the subject, and allowed him to vent his anger without interruption; which he continued to do till he had worked himself up to the most unbounded rage of expression.

But in default of our two lovers, the old major who had lost his leg, thought proper at last to interrupt the violence of his career. — My nephew, said

said he, addressing himself to my lover,
I both admire and applaud the cool-
ness with which you suffer your kins-
man to display his ill-humour: were
it not for the respect that is due to
his cloth, I should call it impertinence:
but he well knows that he may say
what he pleases to you: he holds you
by a tie that binds almost every man,
that of interest: but if you are the
true son of my brother, I am sure that
you will set his threats at defiance, and
act the part of a man of honour, what-
ever vengeance he may have resolved
in the baseness of his heart to wreak
upon you.

A mere man of the world, like you,
exclaimed the dignitary, consults no-
thing

thing; but the current notions of false honour that lead mankind astray. I have my nephew's solid welfare in view; and I deem it my duty to interpose between him and a woman who may poison his mind, or at least those of the progeny she may bring him.

A false pretence, rejoined the uncle: it is not the spiritual interest of my nephew you have in view, so much as the temporal aggrandizement of your own niece. At the death of his cousin you well know he is to inherit the title of count; it is the rank of countess you mean to purchase for that lady, with the wealth which is to be the price of his marrying her: but I,
that

that am his uncle, insist that he do strict justice to the English lady whom he has brought captive hither, whatever may be her religion or her fortune; were his father alive, he would speak the same language that I do.

The old dignitary had observed that when Miss Brenton and I sat down to table, and when we rose from it, neither of us had made the sign of the cross, as it is usual to do in Roman Catholic countries. Rightly judging from that circumstance that we were both Protestants, he was glad to avail himself of this pretence to oppose a union which was to counteract his own views.

The

The only reply he made to what the uncle had said, was that he should not recede from his determination, and would employ all the means in his power to prevent a connexion that was discountenanced by the laws of his country, and contrary to the interests of its religion.

The uncle replied with indignation, that men of his profession had already done too much harm to their country by their intemperate zeal; but that it was often made a cloak to the most sordid purposes.

This conversation had greatly alarmed our two lovers. We took particular notice

notice that the old canon did not accompany them to the garden; and that Miss Brenton's lover spoke of him to his sister in terms that shewed they had not parted with him in peace.

The afternoon was spent in great cordiality among us all, to which the absence of the dignitary not a little contributed. I found by what was dropped concerning him, that the expectations of profiting by him were the sole inducement of the attentions that were paid to him in this house. He was indeed of a most forbidding presence; a frown sat perpetually upon his forehead, which was much more wrinkled by the sourness of his disposition than
by

by the pressures of age. He seemed a burden upon the company, and I could perceive they were all pleased to be without him.

At supper the good old lady, my admirer's mother, turning to his uncle, thanked him in the most heartfelt language for the rebuke he had given to the canon, assuring him that the loss of his inheritance would not afflict her so much as a refusal from me to become her daughter.

The major, taking me affectionately by the hand—Nephew, said he, rejoice that I am an old man; otherwise I would not answer for myself, that I might not be prompted to follow
your

your example in running away with this lady.

He came out with many other expressions in that strain, and kept up a spirit of festivity that lasted without any diminution till the time of retiring to rest; when the old lady conducted Miss Brenton and me to our apartment. She was accompanied by the two sisters. They all three embraced us with a fondness that shewed how much they had at heart the success of what had been the subject of her after-dinner's conversation.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

Your example in running away with
this lady, and your conduct in
the case of the lady who was
He came out with many other ex-
pressions in that strain, and kept up a
point of levity that lasted without
any diminution of the force of telling
to tell a when lady conducted
Miss Eton and to our apart-
ment. She was accompanied by the
two sisters. They all three embraced
us with a fondness that showed how
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est conversation.



